Japan by Train

Travel Guide

japan experience

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2018 EDITION

Guide & Maps Key

TOKYO 0 km
Start and finish

SHINAGAWA 7 km
Stations

JR lines

Private lines

Information

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How to Get There

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Opening Times

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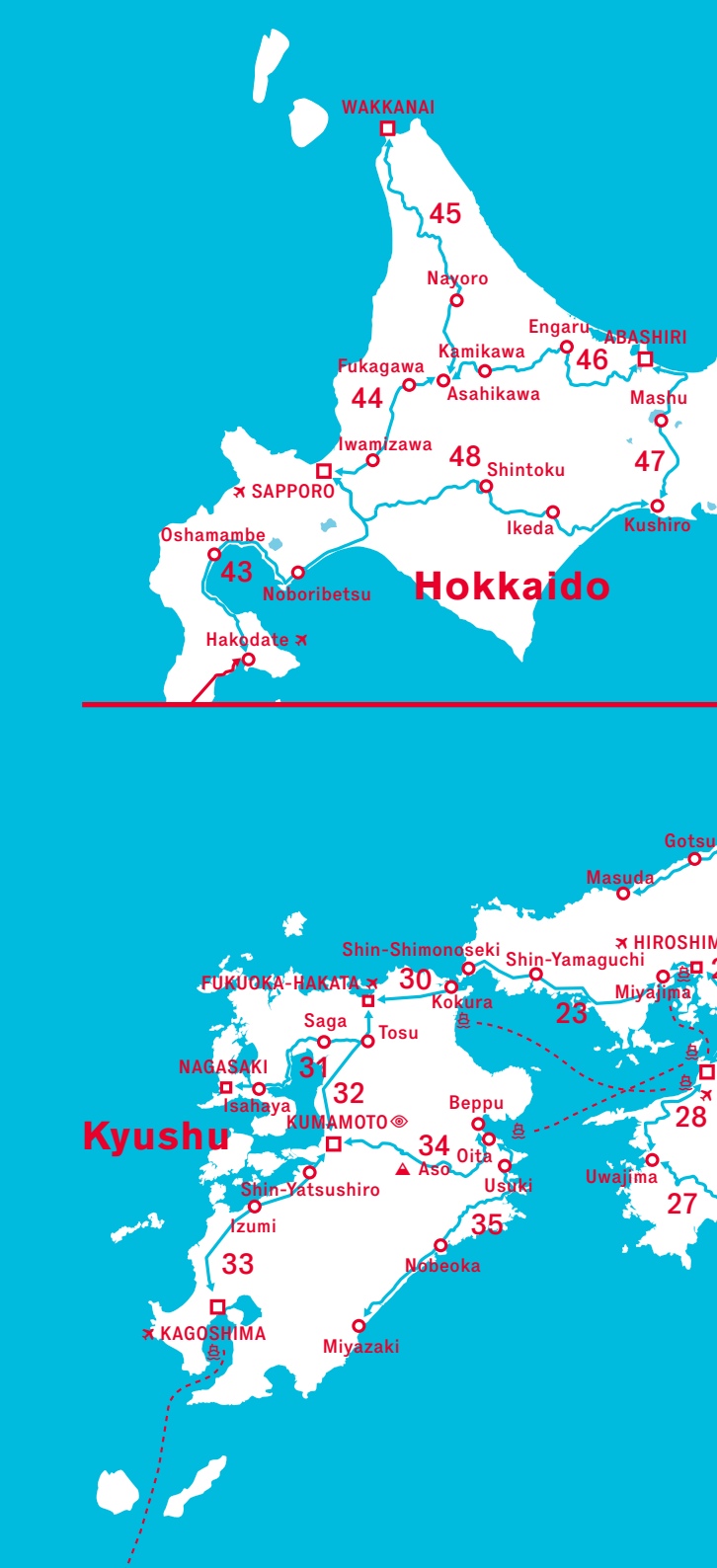
Itinerary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Far more than a trip

Founded in 1981, **Japan Experience** is a Japan specialist travel company, offering unique products and services. With a large network of guides, Travel Angels, who will advise and guide you throughout 10 cities across Japan.

Other products and services we offer:

- Houses and apartments available for rent in Tokyo, Kyoto, Kanazawa and Takayama
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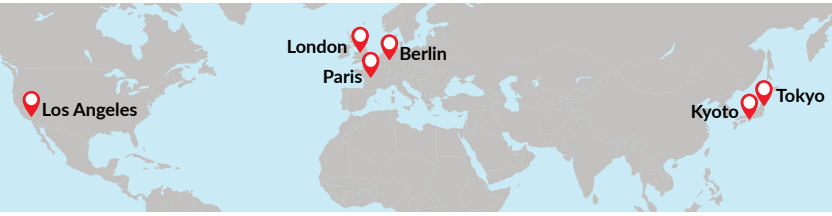

Japan experience

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Why Take the Train in Japan?

There are two parts to every trip: the destination — the goal and the impetus for departure — and the journey — the glimpses of scenery that are caught and the cities that are crossed.

In Japan, nothing beats the train to really enjoy the journeys within a journey. From the great plains of Hokkaido in the north to the idyllic shores of Kyushu in the south, the train can take you effortlessly to the four corners of the archipelago, without mishaps and in the greatest comfort. The Japan Rail Pass, reserved for foreign travelers, gives you total access to this exceptional means of transport.

On which side of the train should you sit to see Mt. Fuji between Tokyo and Kyoto? When should you look the other way to see the sights of the Japanese countryside? Which station should you stop at so as not to miss anything on your route? How to get from the station to the places that interest you? This guide answers all these questions and more, so you can make the most of your Japan Rail Pass.

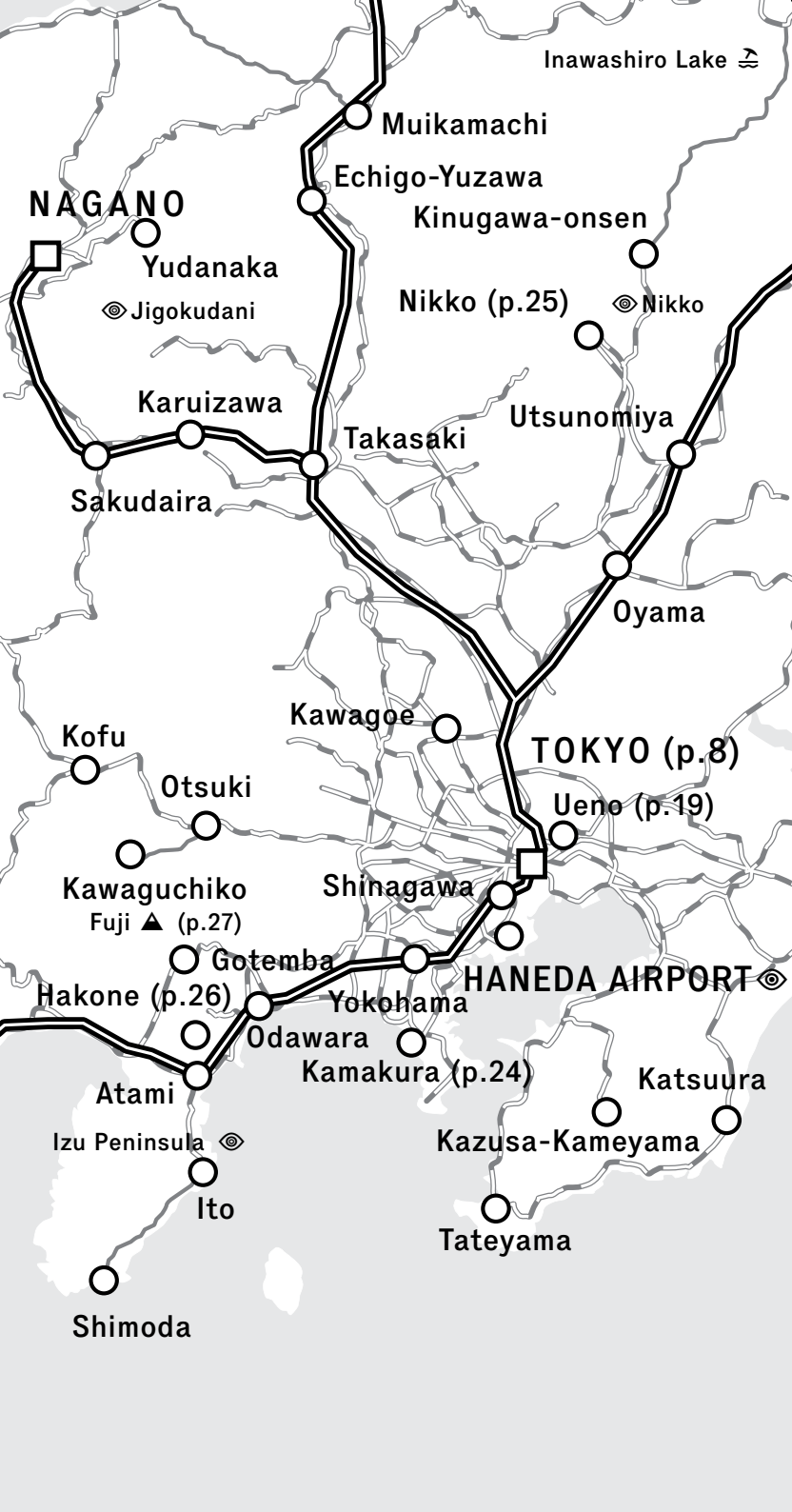
In Japan, the train is more than just a means of transportation. It is part of Japanese culture and occupies a special place in everyday life. As a source of national pride and a technological gem, the shinkansen, the ultra-fast 'bullet train', is respected and even idolized, and could never go into retirement without a very official farewell ceremony. Pampered witnesses of the past, the steam locomotives that continue to run on certain panoramic lines, are maintained by dedicated enthusiasts and are very popular. Similarly, urban trains such as the Yamanote Line in Tokyo punctuate the lives of millions of city dwellers literally and figuratively, as they all know and recognize the bells of each station...

These little-known facets of the archipelago can only be discovered by train.

In writing this book, the Japan Experience team wanted to make life easier and more interesting for travelers who have decided to discover Japan by train. Section by section, town by town, mile by mile, the reader is informed about things to see and do in towns through which they pass as well as stops not to miss and the distance they have traveled. We have included the first and last trains of the day so that the traveler can get an idea of the timings and duration of the journey and better prepare themselves for their trip.

As specialists in travel to Japan for over 30 years we are always on the lookout for new recommendations, and we have shared some of our favourites in each city we feature. Should you have a suggestion of somewhere we should include or a comment or update on something already in the guide, please do let us know so we can take this into consideration for the next edition. Please send your comments by email to contact@japan-experience.com

The Japan Experience Team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Iwaki
Hitachi
Mito
NARITA AIRPORT
Choshi

Tokyo

Although Tokyo is now the capital of Japan, it has only relatively recently joined the pages of Japanese history books. For centuries, it was an insignificant village called Edo. However, in 1603 the new shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, decided to make it the seat of his government.

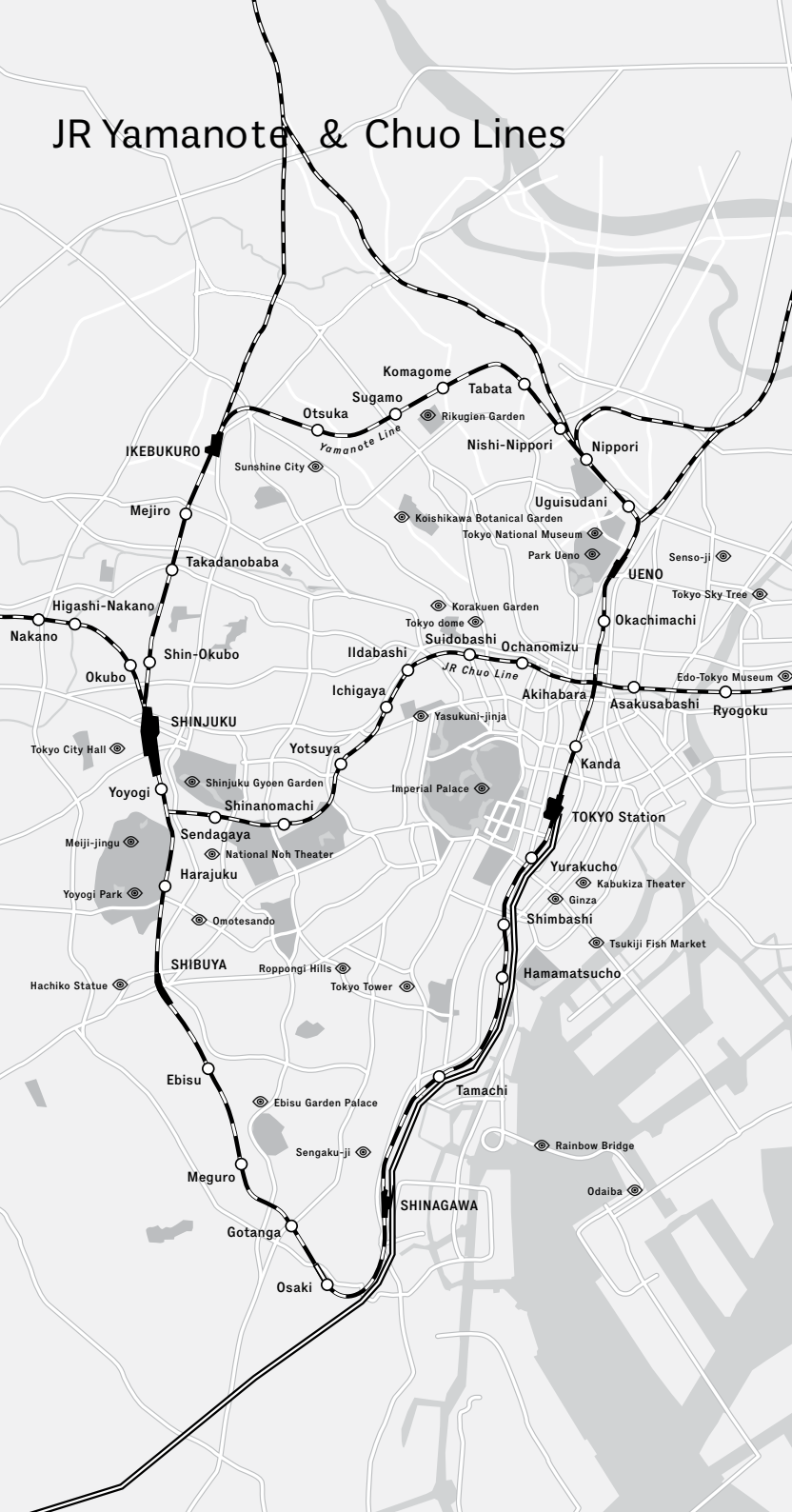
The Tokugawa shogunate was overthrown in 1868, and the Japanese Emperor was restored to power and moved the capital from Kyoto to Edo, now renamed Tokyo.
Today, Tokyo is one of the most popular cities in the world, and Greater Tokyo counts over 13 million inhabitants.
Not a great deal of the old city remains; however, if you look beyond the urban concrete and frenzy, you will discover a vibrant and energetic city, with a mix of tradition and modernity.

The best way to get around the city is by subway or Japan Rail's commuter trains that run above ground, including the Chuo Line, which cuts across Tokyo between Shinjuku and Tokyo stations and the circular service on the Yamanote Line, which is an excellent way to discover the different sides to the city.
A full loop on the Yamanote Line takes around 1 hour.

Because of the sheer number of people, transport gets very crowded during peak times and staff is employed in some stations to push passengers onto trains.
To see the crowding first hand, visit Shinjuku Station between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. on a weekday. It is considered the busiest station in the world. However, if you avoid morning and evening rush hours you can travel around the city in comfort, with frequent and reliable services.

Discover the real Japan with our house rentals in **Tokyo** on page **88**.

JR Yamanote & Chuo Lines



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https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-tokyo

Getting Around in Tokyo

To remedy this colossal size, the city has built a dense and practical, if rather complex, transportation system. See our tips for using the various means of transportation available and get around the Japanese capital efficiently.

1. **By train**
The train is the most efficient way to get around Tokyo. They are punctual, frequent and constitute the fastest way to go from one side of the city to another. The circular JR Yamanote line goes around Tokyo and serves most of the big stations. The private lines leave from those stations and radiate outwards. With your Japan Rail Pass you can travel for free on the Yamanote line, the Chuo-Sobu line that crosses Tokyo from East to West, the Tokyo Monorail that goes around the bay and heads towards the Haneda Airport, as well as the other JR Lines going to the outskirts of the city. **Learn more on page 174.**

2. **By subway**
The Tokyo Metro is very well designed. It is very clean and the travelers never wait very long on the platform. Two subway companies share the traffic, Tokyo metro and the Toei lines, with slightly different fares. The metro doesn't stay within the Yamanote ring, but also extends outside the city and has direct connections with private train lines in order to release the traffic congestion on the Yamanote main stations. For the train as for the metro, watch out for the rush hours, in the morning or in the evening, during which the cars rapidly fill with passengers. **Learn more on page 175.**

3. **Cards and Discounts**
Prepaid cards, like SUICA and PASMO, will not give you any discount, but they will make it easier to travel around as a pay as you go option. The cards themselves can be bought in the machines or the different selling points for ¥500, which is refundable, plus the amount you want to charge on the card. The day pass Tokyo Free Kippu (¥1590) allows you to use the metro as well as the JR lines. The Toei and Tokyo Metro One-Day Economy Pass (¥900) is only valid for the metro (it can be used as a complement for the JR Pass), and the Tokyo Metro Open Ticket (¥600 for a day, ¥980 for 2 days) can only be used for the Tokyo Metro lines.

4. **By bike**
Some tourist areas like Asakusa or Yanaka offer bicycle rent for local tours. Cycling is one means of transportation that is both ecological and flexible. Faster than walking, most young Tokyoites prefer it, but beware of traffic rules! According to the law, bikes are supposed to ride on the road with the cars, but the absence of cycle lanes makes it difficult. On sidewalks be careful not to hit pedestrians!

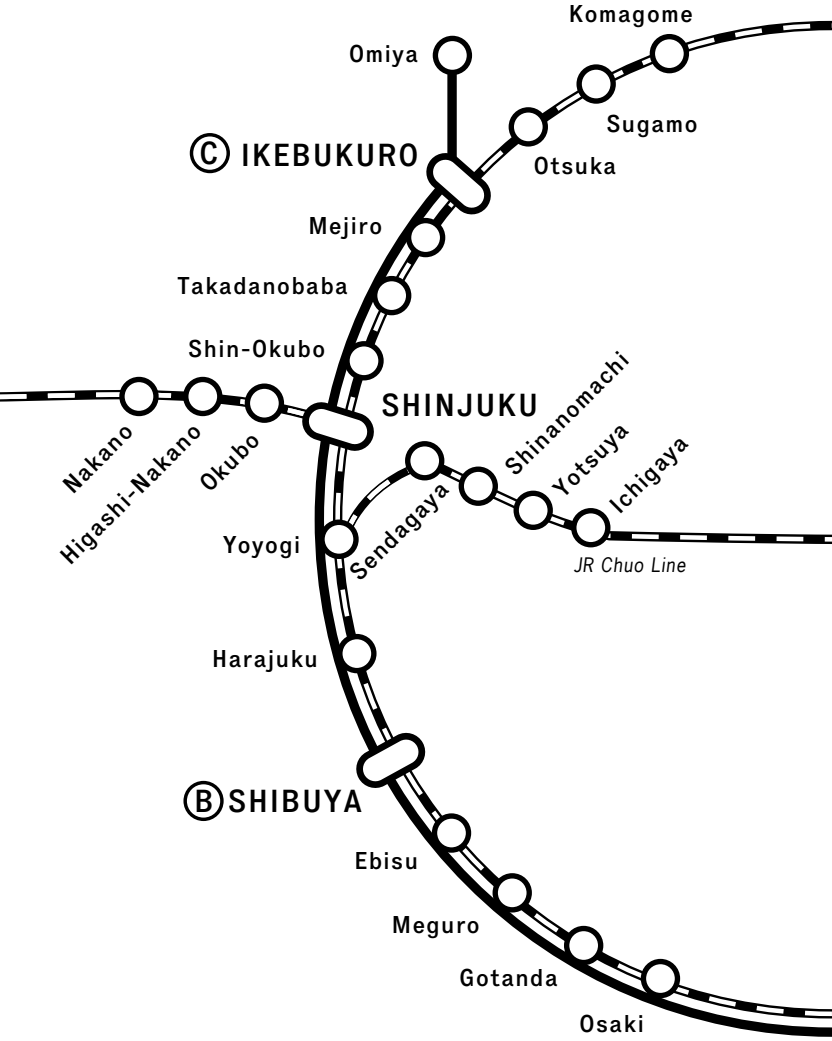
5. **By taxi**
In Tokyo, the taxi is a practical but expensive means of transportation. Be careful, the elevated night rate starts at 11 p.m. However, taxis are numerous and you will have no problem finding one. The maximum number of people that can ride is 4. Not all taxis accept credit cards. Given the complexity of the streets, most taxis are now equipped with GPS, but as most drivers don't speak English, it might be a good idea to prepare a note with your destination written on it. Starting fare : **¥410 for the first kilometer**

6. **By bus**
Although tourists tend to prefer the train, the bus is often a good alternative to rail. If the directions look too difficult, don't hesitate to ask the bus drivers, as they are usually very well informed and obliging. The fare is ¥210, to be paid when entering the bus. The main bus company is Toei (Tokyo Metropolitan), and other private companies like Odakyu or Keio also run in the city. The Toei buses also offer a tour bus that will take you to visit the old part of the city called 'Tokyo Shitamachi Bus'.

Yamanote Line

35 km total, ***59 min*** fastest journey (full loop), ***1*** train every ***2 to 4 minutes***
The line is identified by its green color and the letters JY
<**LOOP**>Timetable start and end at Osaki. First train clockwise ***04:27*** First train counterclockwise ***04:30*** | Last train clockwise ***0:42*** Last train counterclockwise ***1:16***

This is the best-known and most convenient JR line in Tokyo. It makes a loop around the city, stopping at 29 stations. All stations are announced in English and there are digital signboards in each compartment. Over three and a half million passengers ride the Yamanote Line per day. The frequency of the trains is increased to every 3-4 minutes during rush hour.



Yamanote Line and Chuo Line Itinerary

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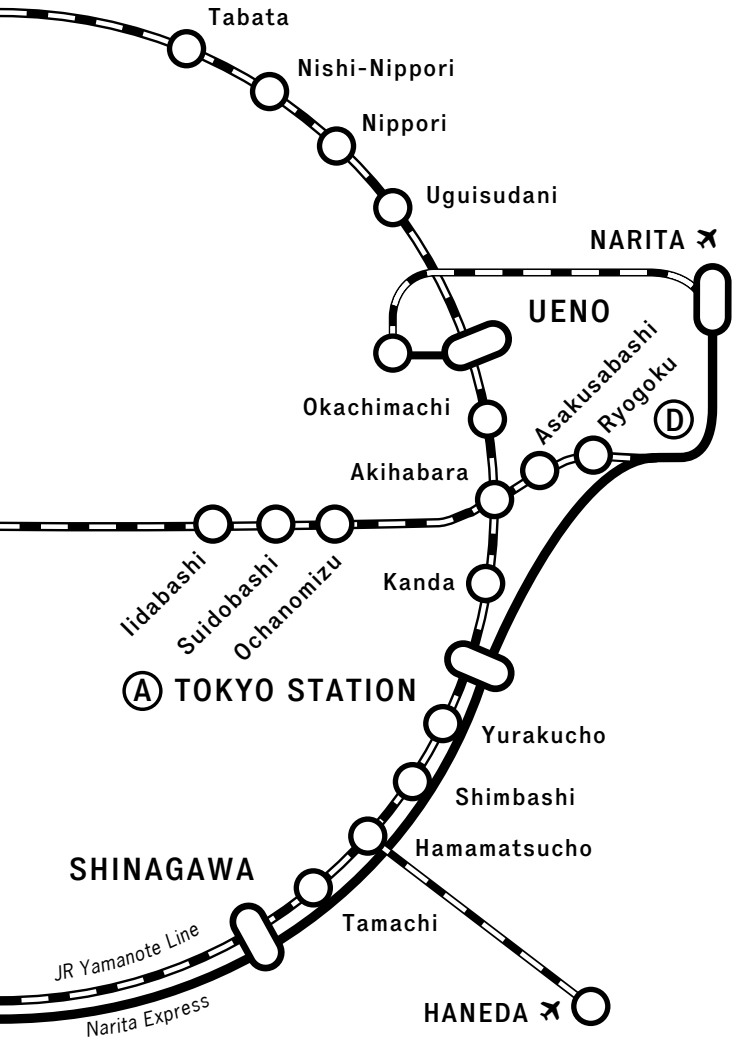
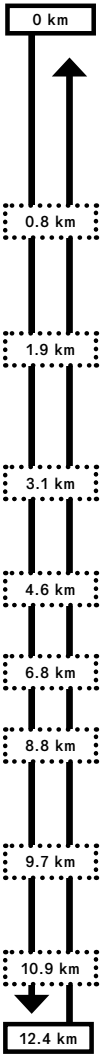


A From Tokyo Station to Ebisu

Our journey will begin and end at Tokyo Station, traveling in a clockwise direction.



TOKYO STATION

The terminus for most shinkansen services and classic JR lines. A short walk north-west from the Marunouchi exit will lead you to the Imperial Palace and the Imperial Palace East Gardens. The palace was built on the site of the former Edo castle. It was completed in 1888 and is now the residence of Emperor Akihito.

YURAKUCHO A 5 minute walk from Yurakucho is Ginza, considered the most fashionable shopping district in Japan.Tsukiji Fish Market is two stops from Ginza on the Hibiya Subway Line. It is the largest wholesale fish market in Japan.

SHIMBASHI The birthplace of the railway in Japan. At nearby Shiodome, you can visit the former Shimbashi Station, which is a replica of Japan's first station building. Hama Rikyu Garden is a 10-15 minute walk from the station. It is one of Tokyo's best-known landscape gardens and dates back 300 years.

HAMAMATSUCHO Connection with the Tokyo Monorail to Haneda Airport. From here, also visit the 333-meter high (1 093 feet) Tokyo Tower which was constructed in 1958. The Main Observatory is at 150 meters (492 feet) and the Special Observatory is at 250 meters (820 feet).

TAMACHI Just across from the station stands the Tokyo Institute of Technology.

SHINAGAWA Also a stop for Keihin-Tohoku, Yokosuka, Sobu and Tokaido mainlines, the Narita Express and for connections with the shinkansen to Nagoya, Kyoto, Shin-Osaka, Hiroshima and Fukuoka.

OSAKI This business district has developed rapidly over recent years. It has a very futuristic appearance with its many modern 'cities', or clusters of buildings.

GOTANDA This district is one of the few in Tokyo which have retained much of their traditional character. The Tokyo Design Center is situated just opposite Gotanda Railway Station. Hara Museum of Contemporary Art is about a 10-minute walk from the station.

MEGURO is mainly a residential area, popular for its hilly landscape and its river, which is a famous hanami spot.

EBISU

Transfer here to the Hibiya Subway Line to visit Roppongi, Tokyo's best-known nightlife district, which has more bars and nightclubs than any other district outside of Shinjuku. It is anchored by two huge developments: Roppongi Hills and Tokyo Midtown that house everything from stores and restaurants to hotels, cinemas and art museums.

Tokyo Station

WHERE TO STAY

THE TOKYO STATION HOTEL 東京ステーションホテル Dating back 100 years, after renovation, recently reopened its doors along with Tokyo station. Take the opportunity to stay at a historical monument.
1-9-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100-0005
03-5220-1111
www.thetokyostationhotel.jp

HOTEL METROPOLITAN MARUNOUCHI A stylish luxury hotel connected to the Tokyo Station with a special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders. You can enjoy a superb view of the city from their restaurant lounge.
1-7-12 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100-0005
03-3211-2233
www.hotelmetropolitanmarunouchi.jp

PEARL HOTEL YAESU パール ホテル八重洲 A quiet, modern and reasonably priced hotel, only a five minute walk from the Yaesu North Exit of Tokyo Station.
1-2-6 Yaesu, Chuo-ku, Tokyo, 103-0028
03-3246-8080
www.pearlhotels.jp/en/yaesu/index.html

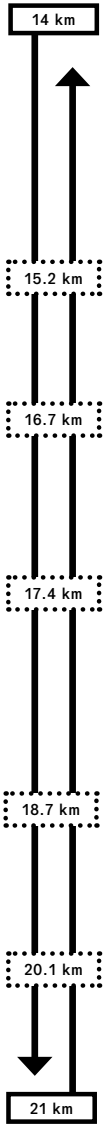
WHERE TO EAT

WASHOKU EN 和食 えん A popular izakaya just outside of Tokyo Station. From the Marunouchi north exit, the restaurant is on the 5th floor of a building called Marunouchi Oazo, directly to the right, across the street.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 5 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.
03-5223-9896
www.wasyoku-en.com

MEAL MUJI ミール無印 The well-known MUJI 'brandless' stores that have been spreading all over the world have their own cafés in Japan! This cafeteria-style restaurant serves lots of different healthy meals with your choice of sides. From the Yaesu south exit of Tokyo Station, turn right to walk south down Sotobori-dori. Meal Muji is a 5 minute walk and will be on your right.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
03-5208-8241
cafemeal.muji.com/sg

BANCHO MARUNOUCHI (萬鳥 MARUNOUCHI) This Yakitori restaurant is on the 5th floor of the Shin-Marunouchi Building, 2 minutes walk from Tokyo Station's main Exit.
11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.
03-5224-8025

B From Shibuya to Mejiro



SHIBUYA

This is a vibrant shopping and nightlife area and is home to more than a dozen department stores, including the Hikarie Complex, which opened in 2012 and offers a theater, restaurants, art galleries and a shopping mall. Do not miss the lights changing at Shibuya Crossing, reported to be Japan's busiest crossing, nicknamed 'Times Square of Tokyo'.

HARAJUKU Yoyogi Park is opposite the station. The park is home to Meiji Jingu Shrine, opened in 1920 in honor of Emperor and Empress Meiji. The shrine is divided into the inner and outer gardens. In late May-June, you can see the blooming iris garden. Harajuku is also a trendy shopping area (notably Omote Sando Avenue), with plenty of restaurants, cafés and alternative clothing and music stores.

YOYOGI The park is very popular, particularly on Sundays and in spring when thousands of people flock here to enjoy the cherry blossoms. But beware, it can't be accessed from Yoyogi station.

SHINJUKU Considered the busiest station in the world. Head out of the West Exit to reach the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building, Tokyo's city hall, comprised of three buildings. From the 45th floor of TMG no. 1, visitors can get spectacular views from the north and south towers. You can also find the Tokyo Tourist Information Center on the 1st floor (daily, 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.). North-east of Shinjuku Station is an area called Kabuki-cho, which has the craziest nightlife in Tokyo, with many strip clubs, massage parlors, pornography stores, bars, restaurants... The area is quite safe and attracts a mix of business people and students.

SHIN-OKUBO This station is situated in the Okubo District, in the center of Koreatown, which developed after World War II. The main street of Koreatown is Okubo-dori, which is lined with mostly Korean, as well as Thai and Chinese, stores and restaurants.

TAKADANOBABA This area, also known as Baba, is a trendy student area, located close to Waseda University, Gakushuin University, and several other vocational and training schools. There are many bookstores, cheap bars, and izakaya (Japanese drinking establishments, which also serve food). It is also home to the famous Astro Boy, a Manga series first published in 1952, created by Osamu Tezuka.

MEJIRO

One of the smaller stations of the Yamanote Line, with just one island platform.

Shinjuku & Shibuya

WHERE TO STAY

CITADINES CENTRAL SHINJUKU Located right in downtown Kabuki-cho, only an 8-minute walk from Shinjuku Station. Walkable distance from Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, Tokyo Opera Concert city hall and many other museums.
1-2-9 Kabuki-cho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 160-0021
03-3200-0220
http://www.citadines.com/japan/tokyo/citadines-central-shinjuku-tokyo/index.html

HOTEL CENTURY SOUTHERN TOWER 小田急ホテルセンチュリーサザンタワー Only a 3-minute walk from Shinjuku Station, a great location with easy access to JR trains, the subway and to the airport. The elevated hotel rooms have a good view of the city.
2-2-1 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 151-8583
03-5354-0111
en.southerntower.co.jp

GRANBELL HOTEL 渋谷グランベルホテル A fashionable hotel located a walkable distance from Shibuya Station. The hotel has a good mix of convenience, comfort and style.
15-17 Sakuragaoka-cho, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-0031
03-5457-2681
www.granbellhotel.jp/en/shibuya/

HOTEL SUNROUTE PLAZA SHINJUKU ホテルサンルートプラザ新宿 A newly renovated hotel, both chic and modern, only a three minute walk from the JR Shinjuku Station.
2-3-1 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 151-0053
03-3375-3211
en.sunrouteplazashinjuku.jp/

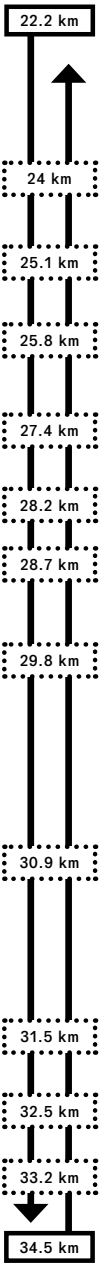
WHERE TO EAT

MIHACHI 御八 新宿中央口店 An izakaya-style restaurant, open late, located just outside the Chuo-higashi (central east) exit of Shinjuku JR Station, on the first street corner.
Open daily, 4 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., to 4 a.m. on weekends.
03-3354-0777
r.gnavi.co.jp/g011000

NISHIO-SAN 西尾さん Japanese comfort food in a fun, ultra-casual atmosphere. From Shinjuku Station east exit, walk down Shinjuku-dori, pass Meiji-dori, then at the next traffic light turn right, and it's around the corner.
Open 5 p.m. to midnight, closed Mondays and some Sundays.
03-3358-6625
https://tabelog.com/tokyo/A1304/A130401/13026389/

HAN NO DAIDOKORO やき肉バル 韓の台所 Yakiniku barbecue restaurant with a hip, elegant vibe. From Shibuya Crossing outside of the station, walk to the looming 109 building. Continue past it, up Dogenzaka for one minute, and it's on your left.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 11.30 p.m.
03-5489-7655
www.foodrim.co.jp

C From Ikebukuro to Tokyo St.



IKEBUKURO

This is the working person's Tokyo and is filled with shopping malls and department stores, notably Seibu and Tobu, two of the country's largest department stores.

OTSUKA This station is located in the Toshima Ward, one of the most international wards in Tokyo. It is mainly known for its Awa Dance Festival, the second largest Awa Odori dance festival in Tokyo.

SUGAMO Known for Jizo-dori, a popular shopping street for the elderly, located just to the north of the station.

KOMAGOME Komagome is best-known for is its greenery and many parks. The most popular garden of the area is Rikugien, which was created in 1702. Kyu-Furukawa Garden is also located near Komagome Station.

TABATA The Tabata Memorial Museum of Writers and Artists, which is just a 2 minute walk from the station, displays items by, and related to, the former writers and artists who lived here.

NISHI-NIPPORI This is a traditional and relaxed area of Tokyo, with many temples, cemeteries, small stores and restaurants.

NIPPORI Change here for access to Narita Airport on the Keisei Skyliner.

UGUISUDANI Until WWII this was a popular geisha quarter, but is now better-known for its love hotels, which make it a lively place in the evenings. Some older wooden houses still remain in its narrow streets and the area is also home to the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music and its art museum.

UENO Just outside the station, you will find Ueno Park, which is one of the largest parks in Tokyo and very popular with families. The park is especially popular in the cherry blossom season, when Tokyoites come to sit, contemplate the cherry blossom, and drink beer and sake. The park is home to: the Tokyo National Museum, the oldest and largest museum in Japan; the National Museum of Western Art and the Shitamachi Museum, featuring recreated homes and stores from the Edo and Taisho periods. Change here for the Ginza Line and alight at the last stop to visit the Asakusa District, which is rich in history and tradition and is the site of the famous Sensoji Temple.

OKACHIMACHI This station is located near Ameyoko, a busy market street.

AKIHABARA This has long been the shopping destination for electronic and electrical appliances. In recent years, Akihabara has also become a mecca for otaku (geek) culture and home to anime and manga stores.

KANDA This district is known for its second hand bookstores.

TOKYO STATION

From here the Narita Express takes 53 minutes to reach Narita airport.

Ikebukuro, Ueno & Asakusa

WHERE TO STAY

RYOKAN ASAKUSA SHIGETSU 旅館浅草指月 A quiet Japanese ryokan in the center of Tokyo, near Senso-ji Temple and Asakusa Shrine. Here you can enjoy the comfort of traditional Japanese rooms while being in the center of the city.
1-31-11 Asakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo, 111-0032
03-3843-2345
shigetsu.com/e/

HOTEL METROPOLITAN TOKYO ホテルメトロポリタン If you are looking for a convenient and comfortable stay here is the place for you. Just 3 minutes from Ikebukuro Station with JR, Tobu and Seibu Lines as well as the Tokyo metro. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
1-6-1 Nishi-Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo, 171-8505
03-3980-1111
www.metropolitan.jp/e

HOTEL SIDE PARK UENO ホテルパークサイド You can enjoy a relaxing stay in this luxurious hotel near the Shinobazu pond of Ueno Park.
2-11-18 Ueno, Taito-ku, Tokyo, 110-0005
03-3836-5711
www.parkside.co.jp/en/

WHERE TO EAT

KONAYA 古奈屋 Udon in a delicious curry broth, served right next to Ueno Station. From the Asakusa exit of Ueno Station (south east side of the station), Konaya is just outside.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
03-5826-5863
www.konaya.ne.jp

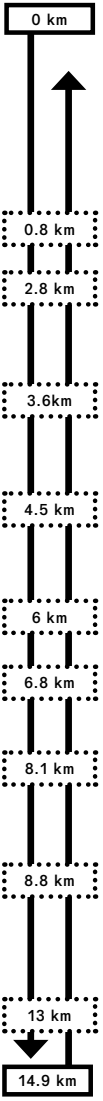
KUROFUNETEI 黒船亭 One important part of Japanese cuisine is original Japanese 'western' classic dishes, like omurice and crab croquettes. Kurofunetei is the place to taste this part of Japanese home-cooking. From the Shinobazu exit of Ueno Station, walk south down Chuo-dori. The restaurant is on the corner of Chuo and Shinobazu streets, on the 4th floor of the Kikuya Building.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m.
03-3837-1617
www.kurofunetei.co.jp

TAISHOKEN HIGASHI IKEBUKURO Famous chain, whose first restaurant was founded in Ikebukuro, worth the queue. Taste a bit of history with the Tsukemen, Chef Iino's speciality. Just 5 minutes from Ikebukuro Station East Exit.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
03-3981-9360
www.tai-sho-ken.com

ASAHI SKY ROOM アサヒスカイルーム Located on the 22nd floor of the Asahi Super Dry Building, designed by Philippe Starck. Quench your thirst whilst enjoying a panoramic view of the city.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.
03-5608-5277

D From Ryogoku to Nakano

This is a section of the Chuo Sobu Line running from Chiba to Mikata. The local trains stops at all stations and crosses the Yamanote Line in Akihabara, Shinjuku and Yoyogi. From Ochanomizu, some trains are rapid along the Chuo Line, which is one of the major railway in Japan and runs between Tokyo and Nagoya.



RYOGOKU

Stop here for the Ryogoku Kokugikan Stadium. Three grand sumo tournaments, or basho, are held at Kokugikan in the months of January, May and September, and each one lasts for 15 days. The stadium houses the Sumo Museum. Also nearby is the Edo Tokyo Museum, which focuses on the politics, culture and lifestyle of people in Tokyo over the years.

ASAKUSABASHI is best-known as Tokyo's wholesale district for doll retailers.

OCHANOMIZU Several universities, colleges and schools are located in this area, making Ochanomizu a popular place for students to live.

SUIDOBASHI Tokyo Dome is the home stadium of the Yomiuri Giants and Nippon Ham, two professional baseball teams. Besides baseball, the stadium also hosts American football, basketball, and wrestling matches as well as concerts, festivals, shows and other major events.

IIDABASHI The station is located above ground on the inside of the Outer Moat of the Imperial Palace, and is elevated over Mejiro-dori. You can take a pleasant stroll in the Sotobori Park, along the ancient moat. Also visit Koishikawa Korakuen, one of Tokyo's oldest and best Japanese gardens, and Kagurazaka, the French neighbourhood of Tokyo.

ICHIGAYA Close to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, in remembrance of Japan's war dead.

YOTSUYA Just a 5 minute walk west of the station is Sainenji Temple, mainly known for the tomb of Hattori Hanzo, the head of a clan from the Iga Region and a famous samurai.

SHINANOMACHI Stop here to visit the greenery of Jingu Gaien and inside Nikoniko Park, a popular children's jungle gym, which features elaborate slides, simulated waterfalls and log cabins.

SENDAGAYA Alight here for the National Noh Theatre, which opened in 1983 and hosts performances of Noh, classical Japanese dance theatre and Kyōgen, traditional Japanese comic theatre. Don't miss the famous Shinjuku Gyoen, one of the most important parks of the Meiji Era. A Japanese tea house can also be found within the gardens. The gardens are very popular during hanami. After Yoyogi station, Shinjuku Station and Okubo Station you will arrive at Higashi-Nakano Station.

HIGASHI-NAKANO This is a nice residential area known for its many restaurants, most of which are located near the station.

NAKANO

The area around Nakano Station is a busy shopping area. The most famous shop here is Mandarake, as it is said to have the best otaku goodies in Tokyo. Nakano Broadway, also known as the small Akihabara, is a covered shopping street, with a tradional look.

Ryogoku, Iidabashi & Nakano

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL NIWA TOKYO 庭のホテル 東京 A stylish boutique hotel near Suidobashi Station with beautiful rooms incorporating traditional Japanese decor. Located a 3-minute walk from Suidobashi JR Station.
1-1-16 Kandamisaki-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 101-0061
03-3293-2228
www.hotelniwatokyo.com

NAKANO SUN PLAZA 中野サンプラザ Only a three minute walk from JR Nakano Station, this hotel provides modern rooms with free Wi-Fi.
4-1-1 Nakano, Nakano-ku, Tokyo, 164-8512
03-3388-1151
www.sunplaza.jp/en/

HOTEL METROPOLITAN EDMONTホテル メトロポリタン エドモント Very well located 5 minutes on foot from both Iidabashi station and Suidobashi station, making it a great place to stay while exploring the big city of Tokyo.
3-10-8 Iidabashi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 102-8130
03-3237-1111
www.edmont.jp

WHERE TO EAT

KAPOU YOSHIBA 割烹 吉葉 Established in an old building in Ryogoku. Here you can try Chanko nabe, the staple food for sumo wrestlers. There is also a real sumo ring. (Sumo jinku performance by retired wrestlers: from 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday). 10-min walk from JR Ryogoku Station.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
03-3623-4480
www.kapou-yoshiba.jp/english/index.html

CANAL CAFÉ This waterside al fresco café-restaurant on the moat right near Iidabashi Station has a lovely view and a remarkable atmosphere. The restaurant serves Italian cuisine. You can have drinks and a light meal on the deck. Rowboats are also available for hire.
Open Monday to Friday 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Weekends 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Closed 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month, national holidays excluded.
03-3260-8068
www.canalcafe.jp

UROKO ウロコ Grill your own fish on the charcoal in this friendly, two-floor izakaya specializing in seafood located in the middle of the lively Nakano neighbourhood.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
03-5948-5652

Japan's *Eki Naka* Phenomenon

INSIDE JAPAN'S TRAIN STATIONS

As central hubs of activity where people are coming, going, and meeting up with friends and loved ones, Japan's busiest train stations are rapidly improving their presence and overall experience. JR stations and subway stations alike are constantly renovating to create a welcoming atmosphere and destination in and of itself. Here are some ways that you can enjoy what's inside train stations, known locally as *eki naka*.

TOP NOTCH SHOPPING AND SOUVENIRS

The most noticeable transformation of Japanese train stations has been the shopping. Big-name department stores have long been running branches attached directly to large stations. But now, these stations have been taking advantage of their underground areas and long, connected tunnels to transform them into shopping malls!

These days, *eki naka* shopping malls range from youth-oriented to gourmet food to high-brow brand name. There's something for everyone!

FOOD AND DRINK

Japan's train stations have also been focusing on the country's dining out culture. Many office workers, or 'salary men' as they're called, will stop off for a few beers on their way home. Additionally, friends who live in distant suburbs in large metropolitan areas will often get together at a train station before going out for a meal. With this in mind, train companies have been making these experiences easy and enjoyable by bringing fine dining right to the station!

Instead of simple standing-room-only noodle shops, nice bars and pubs, as well as popular gourmet restaurants and cafes, are spreading throughout stations. If you're looking for a quick and delicious bite, be sure not to overlook your options inside the train station!

EVENTS

The latest *eki naka* redesigns and renewals also include open spaces for local cultural events. As you pass through the station, you may find anything from sake tasting to charity events to farmers markets to art exhibitions and concerts!
A good example of these revamps is Tokyo station, which was recently renovated for its 100th birthday.

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+81577-73-5715

tripadvisor
CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE

1 Kamakura

47 km total, *46 min* (from Shinagawa), *1* train every *10 to 15 minutes*
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) *04:30* → (A) *05:17* | Last Train (D) *23:59* → (A) *00:49*
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) *04:57* → (A) *05:44* | Last Train (D) *23:39* → (A) *00:27*

Kamakura is a lovely town by the sea, located to the south of Tokyo. It counts 65 Buddhist temples and 19 Shinto shrines, located throughout the town and in the surrounding hills. Kamakura became the seat of feudal government in 1192 after the struggle for power between the rival Taira and Minamoto clans was won by Minamoto Yoritomo.

WHAT TO SEE

DAIBUTSU (GREAT BUDDHA) The Buddha is located at Kotokuin Temple. Eleven meters (36 ft.) high, it is the second largest one in Japan. It was cast in 1252 (Open daily, Apr-Oct, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Oct-Mar, 5 p.m., ¥200).

TSURUGAOKA HACHIMAN-GU SHRINE The shrine is about a 12-minute walk from the station. It was built by Yoritomo and dedicated to Hachiman, the Shinto god of war. The pathway to the shrine is along Wakamiya Oji, a cherry tree-lined pedestrian path that was constructed by Yoritomo in the 1190s. The path stretches from the shrine all the way to Yuigahama Beach (Open daily, 6 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., free).

HASEDERA TEMPLE The temple is located on a hill facing the sea. On a landing, part way up the steps to the temple grounds, are hundreds of small stone images of Jizo, the savior of children. It is home to an 11-headed gilt statue of Kannon, the goddess of mercy. It is 9 meters (30 ft) high and is the tallest wooden image in Japan (Open daily, Apr-Sept, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Oct-Mar, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., ¥300).

ZENIARAI BENTEN SHRINE The shrine is popular among tourists because the waters of a spring in its cave are said to be able to multiply the money washed in it. The object of worship is a syncretic kami, which fuses a traditional spirit called Ugafukujin with the Buddhist goddess of Indian origin, Sarasvati, known in Japanese as Benzaiten. The shrine was founded in 1185 by Minamoto no Yoritomo (Open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., free).

HOW TO GET THERE

Take the JR Yokosuka Line heading for Zushi, Kurihama or Yokosuka. Trains depart every 10-15 minutes from Yokohama, Shinagawa, Shimbashi or Tokyo.
(Alternatively, take the Shonan-Shinjuku Line from Shinjuku or Shibuya).

DISCOVER KAMAKURA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-kamakura

2 Nikko

138 km total, **102 min** (from Tokyo Station to Nikko, change at Utsunomiya)
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:20** → (A) **08:25** | Last Train (D) **21:44** → (A) **23:29**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:07** → (A) **07:20** | Last Train (D) **21:46** → (A) **23:28**

Nikko is located at the entrance to Nikko National Park. It is most famous for Toshogu, Japan's most opulent shrine and the mausoleum of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. The Nikko National Park offers beautiful mountain landscapes, lakes, waterfalls and hot springs and the area around Lake Chuzenji is particularly well-known for its magnificent autumn colors.

WHAT TO SEE

NIKKO SANNAI These vast sacred grounds, listed as a World Heritage Site since 1999, includes the three main sights mentioned below. Open daily, Apr-Nov, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Nov-Mar, to 4 p.m.

RINNOJI TEMPLE Founded by the priest Shodo in the 8th century. Here you can visit Sanbutsudo Hall, which enshrines three gold-plated wooden images of Buddha. At Rinnoji Temple the Shoyo-en Garden is worth a visit (extra cost ¥300). Open daily, Apr-Nov, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Nov-Mar, to 4 p.m, ¥900.

TOSHOGU SHRINE Built in 1616 as a mausoleum for Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate. The first shrine was rebuilt in 1636 by his grandson, who spared no cost in constructing this complex as an act of devotion. Open daily, Apr-Nov, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Nov-Mar, to 4 p.m, ¥1300.

FUTARASAN SHRINE is dedicated to the gods of the mountains surrounding Nikko. Open daily, Apr-Nov, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Nov-Mar, to 4 p.m, ¥200.

NIKKO TAMOZAWA IMPERIAL VILLA MEMORIAL PARK Built around the former Edo residence of the Kishu Tokugawa clan, the villa was erected using pieces of the original residence that stood in Tokyo. It was constructed in 1899. With 106 rooms it is the biggest wooden imperial villa erected in the Meiji and Taisho eras. Open every day except for Tuesdays, Apr-Oct: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Oct-Mar: 9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m, ¥510.

HOW TO GET THERE

Using a Japan Rail Pass, the easiest way to get to Nikko is to change at Utsunomiya onto the Nikko Line. Follow signs to platform 5 (beware, not all trains from this platform go to Nikko).* To go to the temple and shrines, you can take a bus in front of the train stations. The lake Chuzenjiko and the Kegon Waterfall are also connected with Nikko station by bus (3 buses per hour, 50 minutes).

** Please note that if you ride with a JRP the SPACIA Nikko from Shinjuku to Tobu Nikko Station or the SPACIA Kinugawa to Kinugawa Station you will need to pay an additional charge of 2000 yens.*

3 Hakone

90 km total, **61 min** (from Tokyo to Hakone-Yumoto, change at Odawara)
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**>First Train (D) **06:26** → (A) **07:29** | Last Train (D) **22:10** → (A) **23:40**
<**RETURN**>First Train (D) **05:26** → (A) **07:17** | Last Train (D) **22:09** → (A) **23:14**

Hakone is part of Fuji-Izu National Park. It is one of the most popular weekend destinations for Tokyoites.

WHAT TO SEE

HAKONE SHRINE (HAKONE JINJA) At the foot of Mt. Hakone, along the shores of Lake Ashi. One of its torii gates stands prominently in the lake.

HAKONE CHECK POINT (HAKONE SEKISHO) Originally built in 1619 as a checkpoint on the Tokaido Highway (Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., 4:30 p.m. Dec-Feb, ¥500).

HAKONE KOWAKIEN YUNESSUN Disembark from the Hakone Tozan Railway at Kowakudani, and then take a 15-minute taxi or bus ride. The hot spring complex offers a range of indoor and outdoor family baths. There is also the Mori No Yu area for more traditional bathing (Open daily, Mar-Oct, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; ¥2900; Mori No Yu, daily 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. all year, ¥1900; entry to both ¥4100).

HAKONE TOZAN RAILWAY - HAKONE OPEN AIR MUSEUM At Hakone-Yumoto take the scenic mountain railway (daily, 3/hr, 40 min). Dating from from 1919, it winds up the mountain to Gora. You can hop off at Chokoku-no-Mori to visit the Hakone Open-Air Museum. The museum features works by Henry Moore and Picasso (Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥1600; ¥200 discount with the Hakone Free Pass).

HAKONE TOZAN CABLE CAR - MUSEUM OF ART Take the cable car at Gora (Opendaily, 4/hr), for the 10-minute journey to Sounzan. Stop at Koen-Kami for the Hakone Museum of Art, which displays Japanese pottery and ceramics (Fri-Wed, 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Dec-Mar, 4 p.m., ¥900). Stop at Koen Shimo to visit the Gora Park (free with the Hakone Free Pass).

HAKONE ROPEWAY Depart from Sounzan (Mar-Jul & Sept-Oct, 8:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m., Dec-Feb, 9:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.), the journey over the mountain from Sounzan to Togendai takes 30 minutes. When accessible, you can stop at Owakudani, a station known for its sulfurous fumes and its black eggs cooked in the naturally hot waters.
HAKONE SIGHTSEING CRUISE An enjoyable cruise between the three ports on Lake Ashi: Moto Hakone, Hakone-machi and Togendi on a medieval style sailing ship (free with the Hakone Free Pass).

DISCOVER HAKONE WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-hakone

HOW TO GET THERE

With a Japan Rail Pass, the most economical way to reach Hakone is to take the Shinkansen bullet train to Odawara. From there, transfer to the Odakyu Railway for the rest of the journey to Hakone-Yumoto, ¥310. You can buy a Hakone Free Pass. It covers the various modes of transport in Hakone and offers discounts on most Hakone attractions (two-day pass ¥4000 from Odawara, ¥5140 from Shinjuku).

4 Mount Fuji

113 km total (Tokyo to Gotemba), **107 min**, change at Kozu and sometimes at Odawara
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**>First Train (D)**05:20** → (A) **07:23** | Last Train (D) **21:32** → (A) **23:41**
<**RETURN**>First Train (D) **05:37** → (A) **07:20** | Last Train (D) **21:48** → (A) **23:46**

Mt. Fuji is very impressive. At 3776 m (12 388 ft), it is the tallest mountain in Japan. For the Japanese it symbolizes the spirit of their country. Over the centuries many Japanese poets have written about it and many artists have painted it, including the famous 36 Views of Mt. Fuji (which are in fact 46), byKatsushika Hokusai.

CLIMBING MT. FUJI

Most climbs start at Go-go-me or Fifth Station level. The Kawaguchiko-Yoshidaguchi Trail is one of the trails leaving from here and is the most popular, the most accessible and the least steep. The official climbing season is from July 1st to August 31st and visitors are discouraged from climbing outside of this period due to climatic conditions and the availability of emergency services.

From the Fifth Station, on the Kawaguchiko-Yoshidaguchi Trail, it is only 6 km (about 3 ½ miles) to the summit, but the trail climbs 1 500m (4900 ft). It takes around 6 hours for the ascent and 3 hours for the descent. Take your time to avoid altitude sickness.

Most people climb in the afternoon and spend the night in one of the mountain huts along the trail.
For more information on climbing Mt. Fuji:
www.fujisan-climb.jp/en/

HOW TO GET THERE

With a Japan Rail Pass, from Tokyo take the Tokaido Line and change at Kozu for the Gotemba Line to Gotemba.* A slightly quicker journey, but with one extra change, is to take the shinkansen to Mishima and change onto the Tokaido Line to Numaza, where you can continue to Gotemba on the Gotemba Line. From Gotemba you can take the Fuji-kyu bus to Subashiri 5th Station (Jul-late Sept, 1/hr, 60 min, ¥1600). Another way is to take the Chuo Line from Shinjuku to Otsuki and change for the Fujikyu railway to Kawaguchiko (around 2 hours, ¥2460).

Alternatively, take a direct bus from Shinjuku Station. Two companies operate the route:

- Keio Highway Bus : go to the website www.highwaybus.com and click on «Reservation in foreign language (english)» to get the on-line informations and schedules.

- Fujikyu Bus : http://bus-en.fujikyu.co.jp/highway
  It takes around 2 hours and a half and costs ¥1750 one way during the day and ¥2650 at night.

** Please note that the Limited Express Asagiri will need an additional fare - ¥1770*

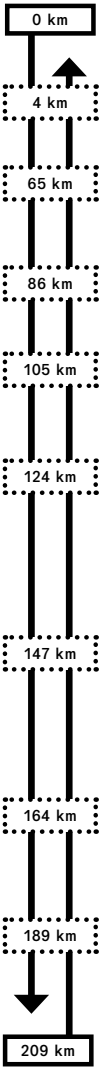
Anamizu
Wakura-onsen
Wakura-onsen
Himi
Tsubata
Toyama
KANAZAWA (p.43)
Johana
Shirakawago
Takayama (p.41)
Hida Furukawa
Wakasa Bay
Fukui
Eiheiji temple
Kuzuryuko
Tsuruga
Gero
Maibara
Biwa Lake
Gifu
Mino-Ota
Ena
Otsu
Hikone (p.39)
Nakatsugawa
Akechi
NAGOYA (p.37)
Tsuge
Tsu
Matsusaka
Mikawatahara
Ise-Okistu
ISE
Futami
Taki
Toyohashi
Ise shrine
Toba

Japanese Alps

5 From Tokyo to Nagano

222 km total, **82 min** fastest journey, **40** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**>First Train (D) **06:16** → (A) **07:38** | Last Train (D) **22:08** → (A) **23:53**
<**RETURN**>First Train (D) **06:02** → (A) **07:40** | Last Train (D) **22:08** → (A) **23:32**

The Nagano Shinkansen was completed in 1997, in time for the 1998 Winter Olympics, and now forms part of the Hokuriku Shinkansen which opened in March 2015 and connects the northern costal towns of Toyama and Kanazawa to Tokyo.



TOKYO

UENO Located on the Yamanote Line, this station is very useful for people staying in the north of Tokyo to board the shinkansen without the crowds of Tokyo Station.

KUMAGAYA For five years until 2012, Kumagaya was the holder of the highest temperature ever recorded in Japan, 40.9˚C. Change here for the private Chichibu Railway to Nagatoro, famous for river rafting.

HONJOWASEDA This stop was built to serve the Honjo Campus of the prestigious Waseda University, as well as the affiliated Waseda University Senior High School.

TAKASAKI The traditional home of the Daruma doll. When you buy one of these good luck dolls, you paint one eye and make a wish. If your wish comes true then you paint the other eye.

ANNAKAHARUNA On the small hills near the station, overlooking Mt. Myogi and Mt. Asama, is found one of the largest plum forests in the Kanto area. Visit in March to try and catch the plum blossoms, which bloom earlier than the cherry blossoms.

KARUIZAWA If you are a Tokyo urbanite wanting to escape the heat of the summer, Karuizawa is where you will most likely head. There are a great many golf courses as well as camps where sports teams, both amateur and professional, train in summer. Just next to the station there is a large shopping plaza for discounted brand goods as well as local souvenirs, and in winter there is a ski slope at the Prince Hotel, just ten minutes walk from the station.

SAKU-DAIRA From a sleepy town in the mountains before the Olympic Games, the fast link to Tokyo has transformed Saku-daira into a well-connected town from where many people now commute to Tokyo.

UEDA (NAGANO) The only castle in Japan to successfully defend itself from attack by the Tokugawa Shogunate, not once, but twice. Unfortunately it was third time lucky for the Tokugawa Shogunate and all that remains are the three turrets located in a pretty park. Ueda Castle is about ten minutes walk from the station.

NAGANO

Nagano

WHAT TO SEE

ZENKO-JI Founded in the 7th Century, this is one of the most important temples in Japan and houses the first statue of Buddha, which was brought into Japan in the 6th century. Be sure to find the dark underground passage where the 'Key to Paradise', which grants salvation to those who touch it, is to be found.

NAGANO PREFECTURAL SHINANO ART MUSEUM This museum was established in 1966 and showcases pieces of art depicting the local area as well as art by local artists. Higashiyama Kaii, a famous Japanese master who was awed by the local scenery, donated nearly 1000 of his works to Nagano Prefecture and to house these the adjacent Higashiyama Kaii Gallery was constructed.

WHERE TO STAY

RYOKAN BIYUNOYADO 美湯の宿 Located in the area of Yudanaka hot spring. It is easily accessible from Snow Monkey Park and Shiga Kogen areas. They have English speaking staff. Free shuttle van service from Yudanaka Station.
2951-1 Hirao, Yudanaka Onsen, Shimotakai-gun, Yamanouchi-machi, Nagano, 381-0401
02-6933-4126
www.yudanakaview.co.jp

HOTEL METROPOLITAN NAGANO ホテルメトロポリタン長野 An excellent choice as a travel base, as it's conveniently located near Nagano Station. This urban style hotel provides comfort and ease, serving as a gateway to Shinshu and all of its natural richness.
1346 Minami-ishido-cho, Nagano, 380-0824
026-291-7000
www.hotelmetropolitan-nagano.jp

KAI ALPS NAGANO 界 アルプス Near the Tateyama Kurobe alpine route as well as the famous Hakuba ski resort, this hotel welcomes guests with hearty meals, luxurious baths and wholesome treats prepared on the wood-fired stove.
2884-26, Taira, Omachi, Nagano, 398-0001
050-3786-1144
http://kai-ryokan.jp/en/alps/

WHERE TO EAT

MISOYA みそ屋 Extremely popular ramen with a miso broth just outside Nagano Station. Take exit 3 from the station. Look for the bright orange sign just to the right of the traffic light.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.
02-6224-1183

OYAKI KOBO おやき工房 Nagano's famous oyaki dumplings come stuffed with vegetables in assorted flavors. Sample them at this shop directly inside Nagano Station.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
02-6350-7030
www.shunsaika.com

6 From Nagano to Matsumoto

63 km total, **50 min** fastest journey, **13** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**>First Train (D) **06:09** → (A) **07:02** | Last Train (D) **22:55** → (A) **00:10**
<**RETURN**>First Train (D) **06:18** → (A) **07:28** | Last Train (D) **22:47** → (A) **23:59**

The Limited Express (Wide View) Shinano runs from Nagano to Matsumoto before continuing on to Nagoya. The Wide View refers to the large windows in the carriages allowing you to really experience the mountains through which you pass. There are also local trains running on the JR Shinonoi Line, which stop at 12 stations as opposed to the 3 or 4 of the Limited Express and so take up to half an hour longer. The first local train leaves Matsumoto at 06:18 getting into Nagano at 07:28 and the last local train leaves Nagano at 22:55 and gets into Matsumoto at 00:10.

NAGANO

SHINONOI The train will now leave the route that is shared with shinkansen bullet trains heading south to Tokyo. There are two relatively long tunnels as you pass through the mountains to reach the adjacent valley.

AKASHINA When you come out of the second, longer tunnel, you may have a short stop in Akashina. This is the first town in the valley in which Matsumoto is located. From the right side of the carriage you will be able to see the towns and villages on the other side of the river.

MATSUMOTO

Matsumoto

WHAT TO SEE

MATSUMOTO CASTLE Nicknamed ‘crow castle’ due to its black exterior, and one of the best preserved castles in Japan with a lot of authentic wooden features, rather than a reconstruction. Rather than being in a commanding position on a hill, this castle is built on a plain and as such is slightly different to most of the other castles in Japan. There is a very interesting display of weaponary inside, but be aware there are a lot of low beams and steep stairs.

JAPAN UKIYOE MUSEUM A 10-minute taxi ride to the east of Matsumoto Station is one of the world’s largest private art collections. The wooden print blocks here are some of those used to make the most striking images of Japan, but unfortunately, compared to the size of the collection, only a small portion is on display at one time.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL BUENA VISTA MATSUMOTO ホテルブエナビスタ
Located in the heart of Matsumoto, this is known as one of the best hotels in the city. The hotel is a 7-minute walk from JR Matsumoto Station, or you can get a free shuttle bus ride.
1-2-1 Honjo, Matsumoto-shi, Nagano, 390-0814
02-6337-0111
www.buena-vista.co.jp/en/

FUKASHISO RYOKAN 民芸旅館深志荘 A cosy Japanese inn decorated with a sunken hearth, a traveler’s guardian deity, and traditional Japanese art for guest to appreciate.
2-11-21, Namiyanagi, Matsumoto, Nagano, 390-0825
02-6328-6500
http://www.fukashiso.book.direct/en-gb

WHERE TO EAT

SHIZUKA しづか Matsumoto’s most highly rated restaurant, serving traditional Japanese food like oden, for lunch and dinner. From exit 1 of Matsumoto Castle, walk south and take the first left. Shizuka will be on your right.
Open daily, 12 a.m. to 10 p.m. Closed Sundays and holidays.
02-6332-0547
www.shiduka.co.jp

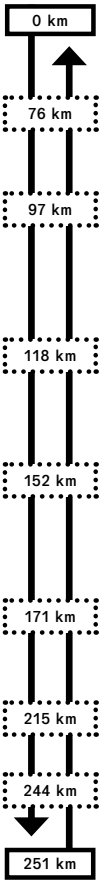
KOBAYASHI SOBA こばやし Homemade soba topped with locally grown wasabi. From exit 1 of Matsumoto Castle, walk south and turn right at the end of the street. Turn left at the traffic light, then left again at the next one. Kobayashi is on the right.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
02-6332-1298
www.kobayashi-soba.co.jp

the menu is available in english on the website

7 From Matsumoto to Nagoya

188 km total, **123 min** fastest journey, **13** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**>First Train (D) **07:04** → (A) **09:17** | Last Train (D) **20:31** → (A) **22:34**
<**RETURN**>First Train (D) **07:00** → (A) **09:08** | Last Train (D) **19:40** → (A) **21:48**

This train line runs through the Kiso Valley, along the route of the Nakasendo Highway, the old postal route between Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto. Three towns along the way have some very well preserved features and are well worth a visit: Narai, Tsumago and Magome. Narai is on the train line, though Limited Express trains do not stop here, and Tsumago and Magome are best accessed from Nagiso or Nakatsugawa. These old post towns served the weary traveler, who would make the journey from Kyoto to Tokyo by foot.



MATSUMOTO

SHIOJIRI This town is named 'Salt Bottom' as it is the end of the salt road from the coast to the south.

NARAI None of the Limited Express trains stop here so you will have to change at either Shiojiri or Kisofukushima to take a local train for about 20 minutes. This is a wooden station, run by a local senior-citizens club who man the station and will look after your luggage for you, as there are no coin lockers. The main street has many very well preserved buildings including some delicious soba noodle restaurants.

KISOFUKUSHIMA This former checkpoint is still the political and cultural centre of the valley; though there are various museums, little of the old-world character of the town remains.

NAGISO Not all trains stop here, so please check before you board. This is the point to take a bus or a taxi for the less- than 10-minute trip to the old post town of Tsumago (see opposite page). A short walk from the station there is also a wooden suspension bridge, measuring nearly 250 meters in length, which is a very impressive sight.

NAKATSUGAWA If you have braved the three hour walk between Tsumago and Magome you may find it best to get a bus from Magome to Nakatsugawa Station to rejoin the route on to Nagoya.

TAJIMI If you would rather not go all the way into Nagoya for a connection to Takayama, you can change here and cross on a local line to Mino-Oita. Be sure to check timetables before doing this.

CHIKUSA The last stop before the terminus at Nagoya.

NAGOYA

Tsumago

WHAT TO SEE

TSUMAGO The forty-second of the sixty-nine post towns on the Nakasendo route from Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto, Tsumago has been designated a protected area, so the town itself feels like a museum. Staying a night here in one of the old traditional inns will be a great addition to any trip to Japan.

WAKIHONJIN Built by an unemployed castle builder and with some features reflecting it, this old rest house for courtiers was reconstructed in 1877. There is a beautiful garden and a museum with exhibits about the area and the old post road.

HONJIN This was the main rest house for the nobility. The building was rebuilt in the late 20th century to reflect how it looked in the 1830s when it was in regular use. You can buy a combined ticket allowing access to both Honjin and Wakihonjin. If you have time, you can take a walk up to the site of the old castle overlooking the town. On your way you will pass the old notice board where decrees from the Shogun were posted.

WHERE TO STAY

GUEST HOUSE KOSHINZUKA こうしんづか Standing in a peaceful area on the Nakasendo trail, by the mountains, is the 100 year old family inn. Enjoy a friendly night of eating and talking to the other guests/inn owners over the irori. They are famous for their delicious meals using local vegetables and fresh fish from the river.
10 minutes by taxi from JR Nagiso station
1775 Nagiso-machi, Kiso-gun, Nagano, 399-5302
02-6457-3029
http://www.kiso.ne.jp/~koosinzuka.nt/ko15eng.html

HANAYA RYOKAN 波奈屋 Found along the Nakasendo trail, stay at a ryokan with 300 years of history. A warm welcoming family runs the inn. The accommodation has 2 wings, the more traditional wing that has preserved its long history and a newly renovated wing with private toilets, promising comfort.
7 minutes by taxi from JR Nagiso station
1811 Azuma Nagiso-cho, Kiso-gun, Nagano, 399-5302
02-6457-3106
hanaya-tsumago.jp

WHERE TO EAT

EBIYA 茶房 えびや Old fashioned sweet dumplings served in an Edo-style tea house.
Open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
02-6457-3054
tumago.jp/eat/ebiya.html

YOSHIMURAYA 吉村屋 Noodle and tempura lunch sets.
Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed Thursdays.
02-6457-3265
tumago.jp/eat/yoshimuraya.html

8 From Tokyo to Nagoya

366 km total, **106 min** fastest journey by shinkansen hikari, **142** trains per day
<OUTWARD JOURNEY BY HIKARI >
First Train (D) **6:26** → (A) **8:18** | Last Train (D) **22:00** → (A) **23:49**
< RETURN > First Train (D) **06:20** → **08:13** (A) | Last Train (D) **21:29** → **23:26** (A)

The Tokaido Line, which runs along the southern coast of Honshu Island, is the country's most important artery. Nagoya, the fourth largest city in Japan, stands as a hub connecting the Alps, Kyoto, Osaka and the Kii Peninsula. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Nozomi).

0 km

TOKYO

7 km

SHINAGAWA Located on the Yamanote Line, this station, which is much less crowded than Tokyo Station, is a convenient place to board the shinkansen. If you are connecting with the Narita Express then it is also a much easier transfer than the huge hub that is Tokyo Station.

29 km

SHIN-YOKOHAMA A few stations away from Yokohama's famous Chinatown with some of the best Chinese food in Japan.

84 km

ODAWARA The main gateway to Hakone (see p. 26). Odawara has a very impressive, if not completely authentic, castle with an observation platform at the top with good views.

105 km

ATAMI A famous spa town that can become crowded with visitors from Tokyo. It is the home of the Oyu geyser and the grave of a Scottish terrier, 'Poor Toby'.

121 km

MISHIMA A gateway to Hakone and Mt. Fuji, change here and again at Namazu for trains to Gotemba, a starting point for climbing Mt. Fuji.

146 km

SHIN-FUJI Mt. Fuji starts to make appearances from this point, though in the foreground there is lots of industrial activity. Take a window seat on the right side of the train to spot Mt. Fuji on the way from Tokyo to Nagoya.

180 km

SHIZUOKA The city is the centre of one of the finest green tea growing areas in the country. Also visit the Kunozan Toshogu Shrine, an impressive shrine a short bus journey from the station.

229 km

KAKEGAWA Another impressive castle, just a few hundred meters north of the station and the first castle to be rebuilt in wood using original methods instead of concrete.

257 km

HAMAMATSU 'Japan's City of Music' is rumoured to have the monopoly on Japan's piano production. You can visit the Museum of Musical Instruments, which is in the only high rise in the city, located just by the station.

294 km

TOYOHASHI Change here for the JR Iida Line, one of the most remote train lines in Japan. This takes you right through some of the finest green tea production areas in Japan.

336 km

MIKAWA-ANJO The last stop before Nagoya and well into the urban sprawl leading into the city.

366 km

NAGOYA

Nagoya

WHAT TO SEE

NAGOYA CASTLE Built in 1662, the castle was entirely destroyed during WWII and partly reconstructed in 1959. Sitting on top of the dungeon are two golden dolphins, the city's mascots.
Open daily, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., ¥500.

TOKUGAWA ART MUSEUM An expensive entry fee for a gorgeous collection of artefacts, including a precious 12th century illustrated scroll of The Tale of Genji. From JR Nagoya Station, take the Chuo Line to Ozone Station.
Open Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥1200.

WHERE TO STAY

ROYAL PARK HOTEL THE NAGOYA ロイヤルパークホテル ザ 名古屋 This hotel is conveniently located in a highly visible location on Sakura-dori, a five minute walk from JR Nagoya Station (Sakuradori Exit), the largest train terminal in the Chubu Region.
3-23-13 Meieki, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya, 450-0002
052-300-1111
www.rph-the.co.jp/nagoya/en

THE B NAGOYA ザ ビ 名古屋 With its modern rooms and its excellent situation in the area of Sakae, the B Nagoya has a relaxing ambience and provides free Wi-Fi.
4-15-23 Sakae, Naka-ku, Nagoya-shi, Aichi, 460-0008
052-241-1500
www.nagoya.theb-hotels.com/en

WHERE TO EAT

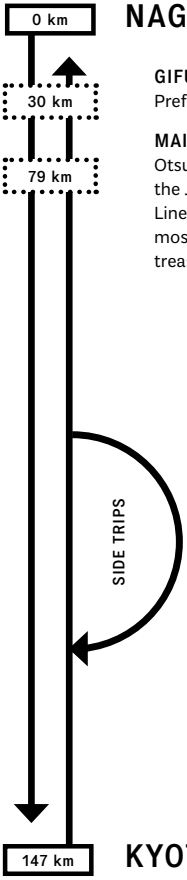
DAIBUTSU KOROKORO 大仏ころころ This classy izakaya where a 9.5 foot-tall bronze Buddha sits enthroned at the center of the main room, has inventive tofu dishes and decent sashimi sets. Across from the main post office, north of JR Nagoya Station's Sakura exit.
Open Monday to Friday from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., on weekends 5 p.m. to 3 a.m.
05-2581-9130.

YAMAMOTOYA SOHONKE 山本や総本家 Come here for a big, steaming bowl of misonikomi udon, a hearty, miso-based broth with green onions and mushrooms. A simple, but authentic restaurant. Across the road from the eye-catching Nadya Park Building, halfway between the Fushimi and Yaba-cho subway stations.
Open daily (*except wednesday*) 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. & 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
05-2241-5617
yamamotoya.co.jp

9 From Nagoya to Kyoto

147 km total, **34 min** fastest journey by shinkansen hikari, **3** trains per hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY BY HIKARI OR KODAMA**> First Train (D) **06:35** → (A) **07:19** | Last Train (D) **22:17** → (A) **23:11**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:23** → (A) **07:17** | Last Train (D) **22:18** →(A) **23:05**

On this second part of the journey from Tokyo to Kyoto, the JR Tokaido shinkansen does not hang around and stops only a couple of times. Do not miss the stop at Maibara Station if you wish to visit the beautiful area of Lake Biwa, Japan's largest lake. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Nozomi).



NAGOYA

GIFU-HASHIMA the shinkansen station of Hashima City in Gifu Prefecture.

MAIBARA Change here to reach Lake Biwa's two largest cities, Otsu and Hikone (see opposite page). Hikone Station lies along the JR Tokaido Main Line (also locally referred to as the 'Biwako Line') just one station south-west of Maibara Station. Hikone is most famous for its authentic castle, designated as a national treasure.

OTSU Stay on the Tokaido Main Line to reach the city of Otsu that was immortalized in the famous Hiroshige's prints. Located on the south-western shore of Lake Biwa, the city once flourished as a post station along the Tokaido Road (between Tokyo and Kyoto) in the south-western part of the prefecture. Numerous historical sites and cultural riches are found in the city, such as Enryaku-ji Temple on Mt. Hiei, the birthplace of Japanese Buddhism. You can enjoy a cruise on Lake Biwa by taking a sightseeing boat from Nagisa-koen Park, at Hama-otsu.

GIFU Take the Tokaido Main Line in the opposite direction - heading to Tokyo - to reach Gifu. The city is famous for its traditional cormorant fishing, and you can watch the fishermen, as well as their bird colleagues, working on the Nagara River, from May 11th to October 15th every year. They have been used to catch ayu, a type of river trout, since the 8th century. Note that you can enjoy the show from viewing boats. The Nagara River is also the venue for Gifu City's annual firework festivals, which boast the greatest number of fireworks in the country and attract large crowds every year.

KYOTO

Hikone

WHAT TO SEE

HIKONE CASTLE (HIKONE-JO) Hikone Castle is the oldest remaining medieval castle in Japan. It is one of four castles in Japan designated as National Treasures. Besides the castle's main keep, most of the inner moats, guard houses and gates also remain intact. Hikone Castle is a 15-minute walk along the straight main road from Hikone Station.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥600 including the garden.

GENKYU-EN GARDEN The garden lies at the foot of the castle. It dates from 1677 and was modeled on the villa of Emperor Genso, a ruler during China's Tang Period.

HIKONE CASTLE MUSEUM At the base of the castle hill stands the Hikone Castle Museum, whose main attraction is a partial reconstruction of the former palace buildings. The buildings, which include multiple tatami rooms, corridors and gardens, served as the government offices of the lords and were reconstructed in the 1980s. Ordinary exhibition rooms display the clan's family treasures, including arms and armor, kimonos, musical instruments and documents.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥500.

WHERE TO STAY

SUNROUTE HOTEL HIKONE ホテルサンルート彦根 Clean and spacious rooms a 1-minute walk from the west exit of Hikone Station.
07-4926-0123
9-14 Asahimachi, Hikone, Shiga, 522-0073
https://sunroute.net/en/

TOBAYA RYOKAN とばや旅館 A small ryokan with spacious rooms inan old, traditional house owned by a lovely family.
07-4922-0325
3-1-23 Kawara, Hikone, Shiga, 522-0083
www.tobaya.jp

WHERE TO EAT

HINAI JIDORI HOKKORIYA 比内地鶏 ほっこりや This restaurant is really well-known for its Oyako-don (chicken and egg on top of rice). Don't worry - the line out the door moves really fast! Follow the road winding around the south-east end of the castle and cross the river. At the traffic light, continue straight on the right-hand side, crossing Nagahori Tozai-dori. The restaurant is on the righthand corner of the street after you pass the bus stop.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Closed Wednesdays.
07-4921-3567
ichien.jp/hokkoriya/

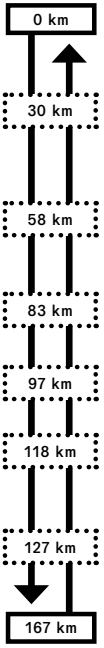
TANEYA たねや Taneya may only sell sweets, but it's a must-see location just next to Hikone Castle. Cross the river on the south end of Hikone Castle and turn right onto Nagahori Tozai-dori. Taneya will soon be on your right, set back from the street a little.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
taneya.jp/shop/shiga_mihori.html

10 From Nagoya to Takayama

167 km total, **132 min** fastest journey, **10** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **07:45** → (A) **10:16** | Last Train (D) **19:43** → (A) **22:15**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:46** → (A) **09:13** | Last Train (D) **18:46** → (A) **21:02**

The Limited Express 'Wide View' Hida trains ply the route from Nagoya to Takayama and especially as you near Takayama, it offers some amazing scenery. Don't be worried that your seat is backwards facing when you board, the train changes direction at Gifu Station.

NAGOYA



GIFU Gifu is most famous for the cormorant fishing that takes place in the evenings from late spring through to late autumn. The river is lit by flaming torches and is a very impressive sight when combined with the fishermen in traditional dress.

MINOOTA If you would rather not go all the way into Nagoya for a connection to Matsumoto, you can change here and cross on a local line to Tajimi. Be sure to check timetables before doing this.

SHIRAKAWAGUCHI Despite the similar name, DO NOT get off here if you are planning to visit Shirakawago. Stay on the train until Takayama, from where you can take a bus.

HIDA-KANAYAMA A small town nestled in the mountains, where life ticks by in a relaxed fashion.

GERO Home to one of the top three onsen in Japan during the Edo period. A free public onsen is available just next to the river (not for the shy!).

HIDA-HAGIWARA & HIDA-OSAKA Administered as part of Gero City these residential areas follow the river northwards up the valley.

TAKAYAMA

Takayama

WHAT TO SEE

TAKAYAMA JINYA This traditional Japanese building was used as government offices until 1969 and is now open to the public and is a very good way of understanding how the old traditions of Japan were easily integrated into modern life. After visiting here, head north through the old town to make your way to the Yatai Kaikan (see below).
open daily, Mar-Oct, 8:45 a.m. to 5 p.m, Nov-Feb.8:45 to 4:30 p.m. (closed Dec 29th, 31 st, Jan 1st), ¥430, free for high school students and under.

THE TAKAYAMA FESTIVAL Held twice a year, in April and October, this is one of the most famous festivals in Japan and is popular with visitors from all over the world. The magnificent floats are among the best in the country. If you are planning to stay in Takayama during the festival, be sure to book early.

HIDA FOLK VILLAGE On the outskirts of the town, typical farmhouses with thatched roofs will plunge you into the former rural Japan. The recreated village exhibits folk objects and is also home to craft workshops (learn more on page 10).
30-minute walk from the train station, or 10 minutes by bus. There is a combined bus and museum entry pass for ¥900.

DISCOVER TAKAYAMA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-takayama

WHERE TO STAY

TAKAYAMA OUAN 高山桜庵 A perfect mix of hotel comfort and charming traditional Japanese-style rooms. Located a few minutes (3 min) on foot from JR Takayama Station.
4-126 Hanasato-machi, Takayama-shi, Gifu, 506-0026
05-7737-2230
www.hotespa.net/hotels/takayama

RYOKAN ASUNARO 旅館あすなろ Only a six minute walk from Takayama train station, this hotel provides comfortable rooms with traditional decoration.
2-96-2 Hatsudamachi, Takayama, Gifu, 506-0008
0577-33-5551
http://www.yado-asunaro.com/en-top/

Discover the real Japan with our house rentals in Takayama on page 95.

WHERE TO EAT

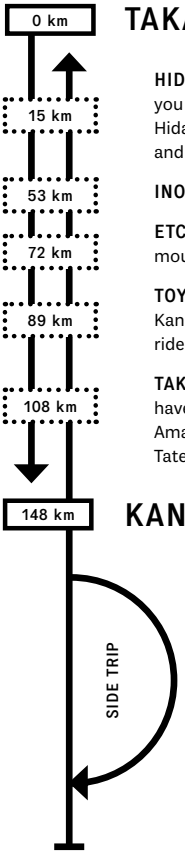
MARUAKI 丸明 Taste Gifu Prefecture's famous Hida Beef and grill it right at your own table. From Takayama Station, head left and then turn right onto Kokubunji-dori. Maruaki is just before the next traffic light.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
05-7735-5858
http://hidagyu-maruaki.co.jp/restaurant/

EBIHACHI えび八 Japanese food in an intimate, laid-back setting. From the station, go down Ekimae Chuo-dori and take the 7th left onto a small street. Ebihachi is on the left.
Open 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., closed Wednesdays.
05-7734-6806

11 From Takayama to Kanazawa

148 km, 137 min fastest journey, **4** trains per day (with one train change)
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **11:00** → (A) **13:17** | Last Train (D) **17:16** → (A) **19:38**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **7:23** → (A) **09:31** | Last Train (D) **16:47** →(A) **18:39**

On this journey you will have to make a change in Toyama as there are no through services between Takayama and Kanazawa. You should take a Limited Express (Wide View) Hida train from Takayama to Toyama and then jump on a Hokuriku Shinkansen (Tsurugi or Hakutaka) from Toyama through to Kanazawa. The mountain scenery between Takayama and Toyama is breathtaking. Once in Kanazawa, a JR bus line covered by the JR Pass connects Kanazawa Station to the beautiful garden Kenrokuen. An other convenient line to discover the city is the Kanazawa Loop Bus.



TAKAYAMA

HIDA-FURUKAWA If Takayama is too big and bustling for you (this can happen during the Takayama Festival), then Hida-Furukawa is a great alternative in which to base yourself and also boasts a lot of preserved buildings.

INOTANI A station deep in the mountains, opened in 1930.

ETCHUYATSUO The first station as we start to come out of the mountains and hit the coastal plain on the north side of Japan.

TOYAMA If gardens are the reason you are heading to Kanazawa, then Toyama Botanical Gardens are a 20-minute taxi ride from Toyama Station.

TAKAOKA A port city famous for bronze production. If you have time, you can head north for 20 minutes on the train to Amaharashi, where you can see the beaches of Toyama with the Tateyama mountain range behind.

KANAZAWA

WAKURA ONSEN From Kanazawa 6 trains a day will take you north to Wakura Onsen, about an hour away. This is one of the oldest resorts in Japan and home to Kagaya, one of Japan's best ryokan. There are all kinds of baths in Wakura Onsen, even ones that can scald the reckless bather, so be careful. To really enjoy the spirit of the onsen town, a night in a ryokan is the way forward (they look a lot better on the inside than the outside) as you can try Kanazawa's famous fresh seafood.

Kanazawa

WHAT TO SEE

KENROKUEN One of the best gardens in Japan and, unfortunately, it is not a secret. The crowds here can really detract from the atmosphere so get there early if you can, to enjoy a little peace and tranquility. It is said to have the perfect combination of the six attributes of a garden: spaciousness, seclusion, artificiality, antiquity, abundant water and broad views.
Open daily, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Oct. to Feb.), ¥310

21ST CENTURY MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART Close to Kenrokuen is a building that is worth a visit in itself, the art within is a bonus. The modern, circular building invites you to approach from any direction and is set in a landscaped garden.
Open 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., closed on Mondays, fees can vary.

NAGAMACHI SAMURAI DISTRICT This is one of the best preserved areas of residences that have been turned into stores, museums and been restored as close to the originals as possible. The cobbled streets give this area a true old world feel and make it a great place to have a wander.

DISCOVER KANAZAWA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-kanazawa

WHERE TO STAY

SUMIYOSHIYA RYOKAN すみよしや旅館 Located very close to the famous Kenrokuen garden and the Omi-cho fish market is the 300-year-old ryokan (with one of the longest histories in Kanazawa) The small inn is run by a very charming lady, inclined to share her love for Kanazawa. Enjoy a simple yet relaxing stay.
54 Jukken-machi, Kanazawa, Ishikawa, 920-0906
07-6221-0157
sumiyoshiya-ryokan.com

Discover the real Japan with our house rentals in Kanazawa on page 95

WHERE TO EAT

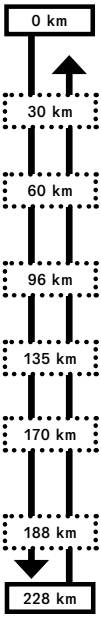
HIZUKI 日月 A popular and delicious izakaya that serves typical Kanazawa dishes and local vegetables. From the east exit of Kanazawa Station, head north up the main road. At the fork in the road, turn left. Hizuki will be immediately on your left.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to midnight.
07-6263-5858
www.hizuki.jp

AKAME SUSHI あかめ寿司 An affordable sushi joint that also serves many cooked seafood dishes as well. From the east exit of Kanazawa Station, go straight and take the second left. Akame Sushi is on the right, past the first intersection.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. except for the 2nd and 4th Thur. of each month.
07-6263-9787
www.akamesushi.com

12 From Nagano to Kanazawa

228 km total, **65 min** fastest journey,
25 trains per day (Nagano - Kanazawa)
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:11** → (A) **07:38** | Last Train (D) **22:28** → (A) **23:35**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:00** → (A) **07:05** | Last Train (D) **21:35** → (A) **23:02**

Opened in March 2015, the new Hokuriku Shinkansen line connects Tokyo with Kanazawa. There are two shinkansen that operate the line between Nagano and Kanazawa, the Kagayaki and the Hakutaka shinkansen. The fastest train with limited stops is the Kagayaki, which take only 2.5 hours from Tokyo to Kanazawa.



NAGANO

IIYAMA Try the local cuisine that is highly valued throughout Japan. Specialities include sasazushi (sushi on bamboo grass), Tomikura Soba, asparagus and mushrooms.

JOETSUMYOKO Home to Takada Castle constructed in 1614; This three story historical building is a great location for night-time cherry blossom viewing.

ITOIGAWA Itoigawa Geopark became a designated part of UNESCO Global Geoparks Networks in 2009. The park boasts 24 geosites located around the park.

KUROBE Change here if you want to take a trip into the Kurobe Gorge (see opposite page).

TOYAMA Famous for it's Toyama clay dolls that dates back to the end of the Edo Period (1603-1867), which became popular after a potter presented one to a feudal lord. Still made today there is a museum for visitor to learn more.

TAKAOKA Built in 1933 the Takaoka Bronze Buddha is third largest in Japan, one of the must see sights of Takaoka.

KANAZAWA

The Kurobe Gorge Railway

As the largest and deepest gorge in Japan, Kurobe Gorge is 80 km long and has stunning scenery with the valley bottom sometimes 2 km below the surrounding peaks.

The 20 km stretch of narrow-gauge railway was built to carry materials for the construction of the dam and only after completion did it become a tourist attraction. The route goes over 21 bridges and through 41 tunnels as it trundles along at a gentle 16 kph.
In the small town of Unazaki there is a museum showing the construction of the railway and of the dam. The next stop is Kuronagi, where you can get off and walk to the local onsen ryokan (hot spring inn) which has a beautiful mixed bath right next to the river. At Kanetsuri Station, even in the middle of summer, you can usually see some remaining snow from the winter. There is a natural onsen hot spring bath in the river bed here, though if you are shy, the hordes of tourists traipsing past may be a little off-putting!
Keyakidaira Station is the end of the line and from here there are a variety of walking trails, some of them cut into the rock, and some leading off to remote ryokan inns where you can spend the night. The trains have mostly open carriages (although there are usually some closed ones) so be prepared to confront the weather. Sit on the right hand side of the train on the way into the gorge for the best views.

WHERE TO EAT

UOZU MASUZUSHI 魚づ鱒寿し店 Toyama Prefecture's well-known local specialty is Masu-zushi, a type of sushi that uses rainbow trout and is sliced like a cake. This restaurant is just outside Uozu Station, one stop before the JR Kurobe. From Uozu Station's exit, turn right to walk down the main road (route 129). Past the first traffic light, Uozu Masuzushi will be on your left, a gray stand-alone building.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., closed the 1st, 3rd, and 5th Sunday of every month.
07-6524-3761
bkyugourmet.moo.jp/uozumasu.html

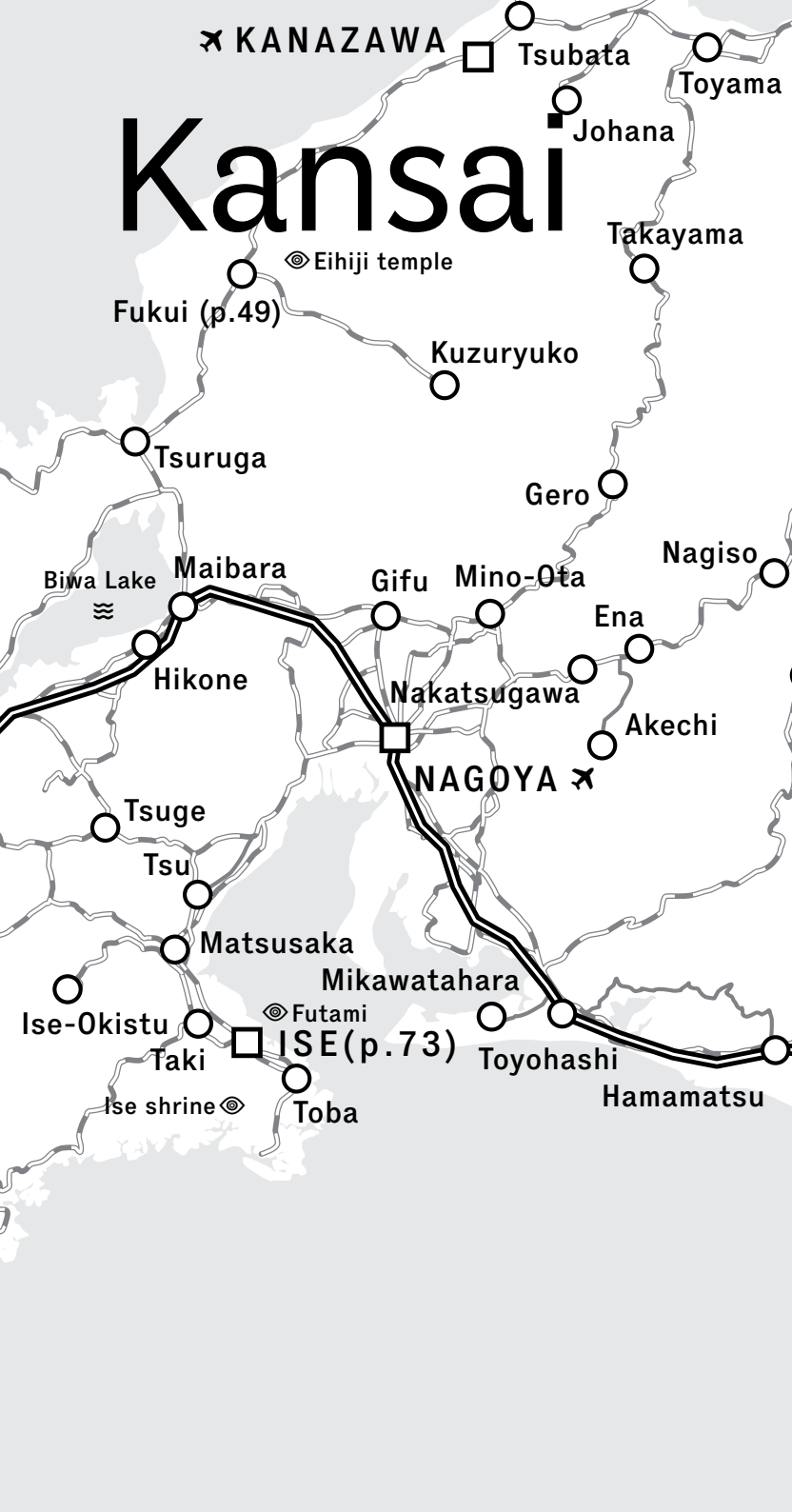
YASOJIN 八十神 This great izakaya restaurant is very accessible from the Kurobe Dentetsu Station and has simple Japanese food served beautifully. From the Dentetsu Kurobe Station exit, walk straight and turn left onto the main road. After the first traffic light, the restaurant will be on your right, next door to a small clinic.
Open daily, 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., 11:30 p.m. on weekends.
07-6556-8015
kurobe.mypl.net/shop/00000303213

HOW TO GET THERE

At Kurobe Station, take the Toyama Chiho Line train to Unazaki Onsen and there you will find the Kurobe Kyokoku Railway. These are both private railways that are not covered by the JR Pass, but it is well worth paying for the day to see the gorge. The line is open roughly May - November (depending on snow conditions) and closes in winter due to the huge volume of snow that falls here. To prevent damage over the winter, the bridges and track are stored in the tunnels that also make up the line.

Tottori sand dunes
Kinosaki-onsen
Wakasa Bay
TOTTORI
Amanohashidate
Toyooka
Chizu
Maizuru
Nishi-Maizuru
Tsuyama
Fukuchiyama
Kamigori
Miyama village
KYOTO (p.50)
Otsu
Himeji
Shin-Kobe
Shin-Osaka
Shodoshima Island
Kobe
Uji
OSAKA (p.61)
Awaji Island
KANSAI AIRPORT
Tennoji
Nara (p.59)
Naruto
Sakurai
Tokushima
Wakayama
Koya-san (p.69)
Koya-san
Kumano
Shirahama
Shingu (p.71)
Kii-Katsuura

Kansai


KANAZAWA
Tsubata
Toyama
Johana
Takayama
Eihiji temple
Fukui (p.49)
Kuzuryuko
Tsuruga
Gero
Nagiso
Biwa Lake
Maibara
Gifu
Mino-Ota
Ena
Hikone
Nakatsugawa
Akechi
NAGOYA
Tsuge
Tsu
Matsusaka
Mikawatahara
Ise-Okistu
Futami
Taki
ISE(p.73)
Toyohashi
Hamamatsu
Ise shrine
Toba

13 From Kanazawa to Kyoto

225 km total, **126 min** fastest journey, **22** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:35** → (A) **07:51** | Last Train (D) **20:47** → (A) **23:00**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **6:29** → (A) **8:47** | Last Train (D) **21:21** → (A) **23:29**

The Limited Express Thunderbird trains, which operate very frequently on this route, connect Kanazawa with the Kansai Region and are a vital link for both business and leisure travelers. This route follows the northern coast of Japan, before heading south along Lake Biwa to Kyoto.

KANAZAWA

KOMATSU The city that gave us the Komatsu multinational corporation, the world's second largest producer of industrial equipment, founded in 1917.

KAGA ONSEN Discovered by a monk 1 300 years ago, the onsen in this district are very highly rated. Instead of each inn having its own bath, there are communal baths in the center of the town.

AWARA ONSEN Another hot spring town with many different types of accommodation, from traditional inns to more modern hotels.

FUKUI (see opposite page) Fukui City is home to the only harp producer in Japan and if you head an hour by car to the east, you can find the Fukui Prefectural Dinosaur Museum, the best in Japan.

SABAE As the centre of spectacle production in Japan, you can visit the Megane (Eyeglass) Museum.

TAKEFU A town that used to be the heart of cutlery production for Japan, there is still a large industry specialising in knife making.

TSURUGA The last major junction before the train heads down the west shore of Lake Biwa. If you suddenly need to divert to Nagoya, here is where you should change. Most trains make no more stops until hitting Kyoto.

KYOTO

Fukui

WHAT TO SEE

FUKUI CASTLE The castle was built in 1606 by Yuki Hideyasu. It was almost totally destroyed by United States Army Air Forces firebombing during WWII and today only ruins remain. You can also see a relic of the aptly named 'Fukunoi' (good luck well) that gave its name to Fukui. The castle is a 5-minute walk from JR Fukui Station.

EIHEIJI TEMPLE The temple lies 19 km (12 miles) east of Fukui. Founded in 1244 the large complex of 70 buildings is spread out over a hillside. It offers a rare glimpse of the daily practice of the monks in Zen training (daily, 5 a.m. to 5 p.m., except during festivals and ceremonies, ¥500). To get to the temple, take the private Echizen Railway from outside the east exit of the JR Fukui Station. Take the train as far as Eiheiji-guchi (2/hour, 24 min, ¥450), then take the Keifuku bus to Eihei-ji (6-8/day, 15 min, ¥410).

WHERE TO STAY

RIVERSIDE SUZUYA リバーサイドすづや As its name suggests, a riverside ryokan with reasonable prices and enthusiastic staff.
1-24 Sanaicho, Fukui, 918-8002
07-7636-3418
www.hotel-suzuya.com

HOTEL ROUTE INN FUKUI EKIMAE ホテルルートイン福井駅前 A well-rated hotel one minute from the station.
2-1-14 Ote, Fukui, 910-0005
07-7630-2130
www.route-inn.co.jp/search/hotel/index_hotel_id_532

WHERE TO EAT

HARU NO OMISE 春のお店 A really popular and highly rated restaurant very close to Fukui Station that serves homemade Japanese comfort food. From the west exit of Fukui Station, continue down Chuo O-dori, then turn right at the second traffic light onto Phoenix-dori. The restaurant is past the Shiyakushomae tram stop, on the left.
Open daily, from 6 p.m. until they're sold out, closed on either Sundays or Mondays.
07-7629-1551

KAPPO TAKE 割烹 武 If you're traveling to Fukui during the winter months, tasting locally caught crab is a must. Kappo Takeshi is famous for its crab and also for its off-season menu. From the west exit of Fukui Station, continue down Chuo O-dori, then turn right at the second traffic light onto Phoenix-dori. The restaurant is on the left, just before the next main intersection of Sakura-dori.
Open 5 p.m to 11 p.m, closed Sundays.

Kyoto

There cannot be a trip to Japan without a stay in Kyoto. The city is where the heart of Japanese culture and history lies.

Whether it is in the cobblestone alleys of Gion or the bamboo forest of Arashiyama, one can distinctly feel the unique atmosphere that makes this city an absolute must-see.

Known as ‘the city of a thousand temples’, Kyoto is a walkable city. Kyoto Station, located right in the center of the city, is its major transportation hub. From there, you will be able to easily reach all areas of the city thanks to local subway lines or JR train lines (free for Japan Rail Pass holders).

An efficient bus network also serves the great majority of shrines, temples, parks and gardens.

Discover the real Japan with our house rentals in **Kyoto** on page **94.**

Botanical Garden
Daitoku-Ji
Kinkaku-Ji
Shimogamo-jinja
Ryoan-Ji
Kitano Tenmangu
Demachi
Ginkaku-ji
Kyoto Imperial Palace
Saga-Arashiyama
Uzumasa
Hanazono
Enmachi
Path of Philosophy
Arashiyama
Toei Eigamura
Nijo Castle
Heian-jingu
Nijo
Nanzen-ji
Sagano Line
Yasaka-Jinja
Gion
Kiyomizu-Dera
Tambaguchi
Yamashina
Hongan-Ji
Kyoto National Museum
Sanjusangen-Do
JR Tokaido Line
To NAGOYA & TOKYO →
Nishioji
To-ji
KYOTO Station
Tofuku-Ji
Tofuku-ji
Tobakaido
Fushimi-Inari-Taisha
Inari
To NARA →
Katsuragawa
To OSAKA & HIROSHIMA →
Mukomachi
Fujinomori

Explore Kyoto

With our Travel Angels

Join our small group activities (8 people max) to experience Kyoto in a unique way.
We also offer private tours where you can discover Kyoto at your own pace.

Japan experience

https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-kyoto

Getting Around in Kyoto

Unlike most Japanese cities, Kyoto is organized in a street grid system. Main North-South thoroughfares have names (ex: Kawaramachi Avenue) and their perpendicular (East-West) counterparts have numbers (ex: Shijo Avenue, or avenue number 4). This grid system, very similar to the one in Manhattan, makes it relatively easy to get around the city. Below are some tips on how to get around Kyoto easily.

1. **On foot or by bike**
The last few years have seen an increase in the number of bike rental stores in Kyoto. It proves that the bike is the best way to visit Kyoto at your own pace. The city is almost flat, and riding along the river is a delight. Be careful, it is forbidden to park in the streets around to the train stations and in the city center. Parking patrols pass several times a week to tow bikes parked in unauthorized areas. Make sure to park your bike in designated parking area (about ¥150 for 8 hours). For walking enthusiasts, it is quite easy to visit the East side of the city and the center with good shoes.

2. **By taxi**
Kyoto is a city where you can find taxis at every corner. It is therefore quite easy to catch one at any hour of day or night. You know if a taxi is free by looking at the light next to the driver, red is free and blue or green is taken. Even if the rates of the different companies are more or less the same (about ¥640 for the first 2 km), the MK or Yasaka (with a clover) taxis are less expensive.

3. **By bus**
Kyoto has a very good bus network that will allow you to go everywhere in the city easily. They usually run between 6 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. The rate within the city is ¥230 (¥120 for children from 6 to 12). You must give exact change, but if you don't have it you can also use the machine next to the driver in order to get some. The 'City Bus All-day Pass' for ¥600 (half price for children) that you can get in the ticket machines at bus stations or in the bus itself, will allow you to travel as much as you want within the city for a full day.

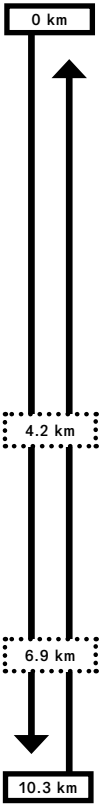
4. **By subway**
The subway network in Kyoto has 2 lines: the Karasuma line from North to South and the Tozai line from East to West. These lines intersect at the 'Karasuma Oike' station. The price varies from ¥210 to ¥350 for adults and from ¥110 to ¥180 for children, depending on the destination. This network can seem quite small and is indeed not designed for visiting the city, except if you want to reach attractions located close to the city center like the Imperial Palace, the Manga museum or Nijo Castle. Please note that the Japan Rail Pass is not valid in Kyoto's subway.

5. **By train**
Private railways cannot be used with the Japan Rail Pass and are not connected to the JR Kyoto station. However they can be good options for some of your trips: The Hankyu line, that links Kyoto and Osaka, leaves from Kawaramachi Shijo, in the city center and serves the Katsura Villa, near Saiho-ji (Moss garden) and Arashiyama. The Keihan line, that runs along the Kamo river from Demachiyanagi station, serves the East side of Kyoto and is an alternative to the JR Nara line to reach Fushimi Inari. Other lines exists like the Keifuku, Eizan, and Kintetsu lines.

14 JR Sagano Line

18 km total, **15 min** fastest journey, **1 train** every 30 minutes
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:32** → (A) **05:47** | Last Train (D) **00:06** → (A) **00:22**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:11** → (A) **05:26** | Last Train (D) **23:45** → (A) **00:00**

A trip along the Sagano Line to Saga-Arashiyama is the best way of making use of your Japan Rail Pass while staying in Kyoto.



KYOTO STATION

Toji temple is located a 15-minute walk south-west of Kyoto Station. A popular flea market is held on the 21st of each month in the temple's grounds from early morning until around 4:30 p.m. The lively market is crowded with vendors on the plaza and in the park that surrounds the temple grounds. A wide variety of new and second-hand goods are on sale, including clothes, tools, sculptures, kimonos, antiques, pottery, toys, food and plants. Toji's five storied pagoda, erected in 826, stands 57 meters tall, making it the tallest pagoda in Japan, and it has become a symbol of both the temple and Kyoto, as it can be seen from many locations across the city.

NIJO It is the nearest railway station to Nijo Castle. The castle is one of Kyoto's best attractions and has beautiful landscaped gardens in addition to the Ninomaru Palace, which served as the residence and office of the shogun during his visits to Kyoto. Originally built in 1603 as an official residence of the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, it is well preserved and, unlike the imperial palace, visitors are allowed inside. An unusual feature of Ninomaru Palace is the 'nightingale floor', so called because the floorboards that run along the side of the building 'squeak and creak' when you tread on them. On your way out through the gardens, look out for the koi carp in the central pond.

HANAZONO Located about 15 minutes by foot from the station, Toei Eiga-Mura also known as Kyoto Studio Park or Movie Land, is a film set and theme park in one. The park has several other attractions and amusements for guests to experience, including ninja performances, a ninja maze, a 360-degree 3D theater, filming demonstrations, and a haunted house that is claimed to be one of the scariest in Japan.

SAGA-ARASHIYAMA

The scenery in the bucolic Arashiyama District is particularly gorgeous in the spring and autumn. Walk straight down the road from the station until you reach the river. Turn right and continue walking, passing Sunday's Sun, a family restaurant with good views of the river and reasonable prices, until you reach Togetsukyo-bashi (Crossing Moon bridge), a traditional-style bridge first built in 836. The Togetsukyo-bashi bridge is a famous spot for cherry blossom viewing (the 'hanami' celebration and for red autumn leaves viewing the 'momijidani').

Kyoto

WHAT TO SEE

KINKAKUJI (GOLDEN PAVILION) Located in Northern Kyoto, the Kinkakuji or 'Golden Pavilion' is a Zen temple whose top two floors are completely covered in gleaming gold leaf. Its breathtaking beauty makes it one of the most visited places in Japan. The Golden Pavilion is set in a magnificent Japanese strolling garden and looks over a pond, called Kyōko-chi (Mirror Pond), that reflects the building.
⚐Take the Karasuma Subway Line to Kitaoji Station (15 min, ¥250) and take a taxi (10 min, around ¥900) or bus (10 min, ¥230, bus numbers 101, 102, 204 or 205) from there to Kinkakuji.
⏲Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥400.

GINKAKUJI (SILVER PAVILION) Ginkakuji is a Zen temple along Kyoto's eastern mountains of Higashiyama. It is composed of the Silver Pavilion itself and also half a dozen other temple buildings, a beautiful moss garden and a unique dry sand garden. Despite its name, the Silver Pavilion was never covered in silver. Instead, it is believed that the name arose as a nickname to contrast it with the Golden Pavilion.
⚐Bus number 5, 17 or 100 from Kyoto Station, 35-40 min, ¥230 one way. By foot along the Philosopher's Path from Nanzenji, 30-45 min.
⏲Open daily, Mar-Nov 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., from Dec-Feb 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., ¥500.

GION DISTRICT Gion is Kyoto's most famous geisha district, filled with shops, restaurants and ochaya (tea houses). The traditional wooden houses (or 'machiya') that line the cobbled streets give the district its typical atmosphere. The most popular area of Gion is Hanami-koji Street a typical though expensive place to dine. Many of the machiya houses there now function as restaurants.
⚐Gion can be reached from Kyoto Station by bus number 100 or 206 (20 min from Kyoto Station, ¥230). Get off at Gion bus stop. Alternatively, the closest train stations are Gion Shijo Station on the Keihan Line and Kawaramachi Station on the Hankyu Line.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S PATH Paved with cobblestones and lined by cherry trees, the Philosopher's Path is a charming pathway through Higashiyama District. For about two kilometers, it follows a canal and passes by restaurants, cafes, boutiques and many small shrines and temples, starting from the Silver Pavilion and ending close to Nanzenji Temple. It will take you about 40 min to walk down the entire pathway. In April, the path becomes one of the city's most popular cherry blossom viewing spots.
⚐To reach its southern end, head to Nanzenji Temple located a 5-10 minute walk from Keage Station on the Tozai Line. To reach its northern end, take bus 5, 17 or 100 from Kyoto Station (40 min).

KIYOMIZU-DERA TEMPLE The Kiyomizu-dera is perhaps the most famous of Kyoto's temples. With its impressive veranda jutting over the valley and supported by 13-meter-high wooden columns, the temple's outline is engraved in the minds of Japanese people. The view of Kyoto you can appreciate from this platform is breathtaking, but not as impressive as the view of the temple during its fall illuminations, when the surrounding trees are glowing with red and orange and the main hall seems to be floating on a sea of fire.
⚐Bus number 100 or 206 from Kyoto Station (15 min, ¥230). Get off at Gojo-zaka or Kiyomizu-michi bus stop, from where it is a 10-minute uphill walk to the temple. Alternatively, Kiyomizu-dera is about a 20-minute walk from Kiyomizu-Gojo Station on the Keihan Railway Line. Open daily, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥300.

NISHIKI MARKET This market is the best way to immerse yourself into Kyoto lifestyle. Seafood, fresh and fried tofu, local vegetables, dried fish... do not hesitate to taste the samples when they are offered to you: it could only be a pleasant surprise. As you walk across the covered alleys, you will eventually get hungry and stop at one of the dozens of snack stands in the market. It is the perfect place to try sashimi (raw fish) or soy ice cream.
⚐The market is a 5-minute walk from Shijo Station on the Karasuma Line.

KYOTO IMPERIAL PARK The park is home to the Imperial Palace, which was occupied until 1868. You can visit the extensive gardens freely or take a tour, but you cannot go inside the buildings. The walk is still well worth it.
⚐The park entrance is located between Marutamachi and Imadegawa Stations on the Karasuma Subway Line.

SANJUSANGENDO Founded in 1164, the temple houses no less than 1001 statues of the bodhisattva of compassion, Kannon. This incredible building was also the site of traditional archery competitions.
⚐10 minutes by foot from Kyoto Station. Open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥600.

YASAKA JINJA (Yasaka Shrine) The landmark of the Gion geisha district and the largest Shinto shrine in Kyoto, Yasaka Shrine is not to be missed. Follow the bright, vermillion gates to visit the heart of the shrine, where hundreds of thousands of visitors go to ring in the New Year, then to its garden, Maruyama Park, home of an incredibly old and picturesque weeping cherry tree.
⚐Take Kyoto City bus 201, 203, 206, or 100 (¥230) to Gion.
⏲Open daily, free.

KOKEDERA/SAIHO-JI (Moss Gardens) Located in western Kyoto, the zen temple Saiho-ji is better known by its nickname Kokedera, or Moss Temple. Entrance is limited and by written invitation only, but visitors are treated to a true Buddhist experience: before entering the stunning moss gardens, one must participate in meditation or sutra copying with the monks!
⚐Take Kyoto Bus 73 or 83 to Kokedera.
⏲Entrance by invitation at one predetermined time per day. To apply, send a postcard with an international reply coupon with your requested date of visit and number of people. ¥3000.
saihoji-kokedera.com/en/reservation.html

WHERE TO STAY

RYOKAN KYORAKU 旅館 京らく Located in the center of the city, this ryokan is only a seven minute walk from the North Exit of Kyoto JR Station.
231 Kogawa-cho, Shichijyo, Akezu-dori, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto, 600-8149
075-371-1260
www.ryokankyoraku.jp/en.index.html

HOTEL GRANVIA KYOTO ホテルグランヴィア京都 This famous hotel stands as part of the architecturally spectacular Kyoto JR Station. Stay here for luxury, comfort and for convenient access to all the public transportation in Kyoto. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
JR Kyoto Station, Karasuma Chuo-guchi, Shiokoji-sagaru, Karasuma-dori, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600-8216
07-5344-8888
www.granviakyoto.com

ARANVERT HOTEL KYOTO アランヴェールホテル京都 Located only a few steps away from Gojo Subway Station, this modern hotel offers a restaurant, a public bath and rooms with a view upon the mountains and the roofs of Kyoto.
179 Higashi Kazariya-cho, Gojyo Street, Shimogyoku, Kyoto, 600-8107
075-365-5111
www.aranvert.co.jp/en/

WHERE TO EAT

OMEN おめん Kyoto's most famous store for udon, its omen udon set comes packed with spices, vegetables, and other toppings for a great noodle experience. From Ginkakuji Temple, turn onto Shishigatani-dori. Omen will be on your left after about 2 minutes.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
07-5771-8994
www.omen.co.jp

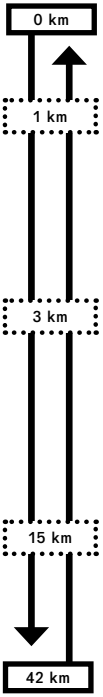
SUMIYAKI AKARI 燈 Yakitori with a great ambiance and unique menu options, meant to be paired with wine. From the south-side of the Imperial Palace (Marutamachi-dori), walk east towards the river for 2 minutes and turn right to go down Teramachi-dori.
Open 5 p.m. to 11 p.m., closed Sundays.
07-5255-1390
sumiyaki-akari.jp

GIRO GIRO Giro Giro, originating in Kyoto, is becoming known worldwide for its delicious take on Japanese cuisine. Experience a traditional Kyoto kaiseki-style meal with a modern flair and a reasonable price. 5 minutes from Kiyomizu-Gojo station on the Keihan line train.
Open daily, 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. except the last Monday of every month. Reservations essential.
07-5343-7070
www.guiloguilo.com

15 From Kyoto to Nara

42 km total, **59 min** fastest journey, **1 train** every 45 minutes
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:32** → (A) **06:33** | Last Train (D) **23:58** → (A) **00:57**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **04:48** → (A) **05:46** | Last Train (D) **23:09** → (A) **00:12**

Express trains depart (from track N° 8, 9 or 10 at Kyoto Station) roughly three times a day, though most trains are local and take over an hour. The first rapid train from Kyoto actually leaves at 9:02 a.m., but if you are not in a hurry try to take a local train and consider stopping off along the way at one or more of the places described below. If you come from Osaka, the fastest way to go to Nara is to take the Yamatoji Line.



KYOTO

TOFUKU-JI One of Kyoto's largest Zen monasteries, home to a famous five-storey pagoda and to a beautiful garden. The temple is a few minutes away from Tofuku Station, head south-east.

INARI The orange-lacquered torii (shrine gate) right outside this station (which is itself bright orange) marks the entrance of the Fushimi Inari Shrine, where thousands of other torii aligned to form a tunnel, await the visitors. This place was featured in the film Memoirs of a Geisha. Visits are free, the temple is open from dawn to dusk everyday. Walk through the torii ascending Mt. Inari to reach the temple's observation point and have an impressive view of Kyoto's skyline. We need to add that there are numerous statues of the Kitsune or White fox, guardian of the Shrine and its god, Inari-okami. They also mark the entrance (and are very cute).

UJI A well-known tea-producing area since the 13th century that is mentioned in one of Japan's most famous novels, The Tale of Genji. Head for the river Uji-gawa by turning left as you leave the station and then go straight to reach Uji Bridge, first built by a Buddhist priest in 646 and mentioned in the Tale of Genji. From the bridge you can reach the nearby Byodo-in Temple, with its phoenix-shaped hall and its large Buddha statue.

NARA

Nara

WHAT TO SEE

NARA KOEN It has all the city's popular sites. Even so, the park is big enough to accomodate thousands of giggling schoolchildren and other Japanese tourists, yet still feel spacious and quiet. Be warned that it is home to divine messengers of gods - the tame deer can be seen just about everywhere in the park. The Todai-ji is a temple complex that was conceived by Emperor Shomu in the 8th century as the seat of the authority for Buddhist Japan.

DISCOVER NARA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-nara

WHERE TO STAY

GUEST HOUSE SAKURAYA 桜舎 The owner of Sakuraya will give you lots of useful information on how to explore and experience Nara like a local. You will have the Japanese experience of sleeping on a futon in a Japanese room.
1 Narukawa-cho, Nara, 630-8335
07-4224-1490
www.guesthouse-sakuraya.com/en_about

SUNROUTE HOTEL NARA ホテルサンルート奈良 Conveniently close to Nara Park and within walking distance to Nara's major sightseeing spots, this hotel has a fine restaurant with typical meals of the region.
1110 Takabatakecho, Nara, 630-8301
0742-22-5151
www.sunroute-nara.co.jp/en/

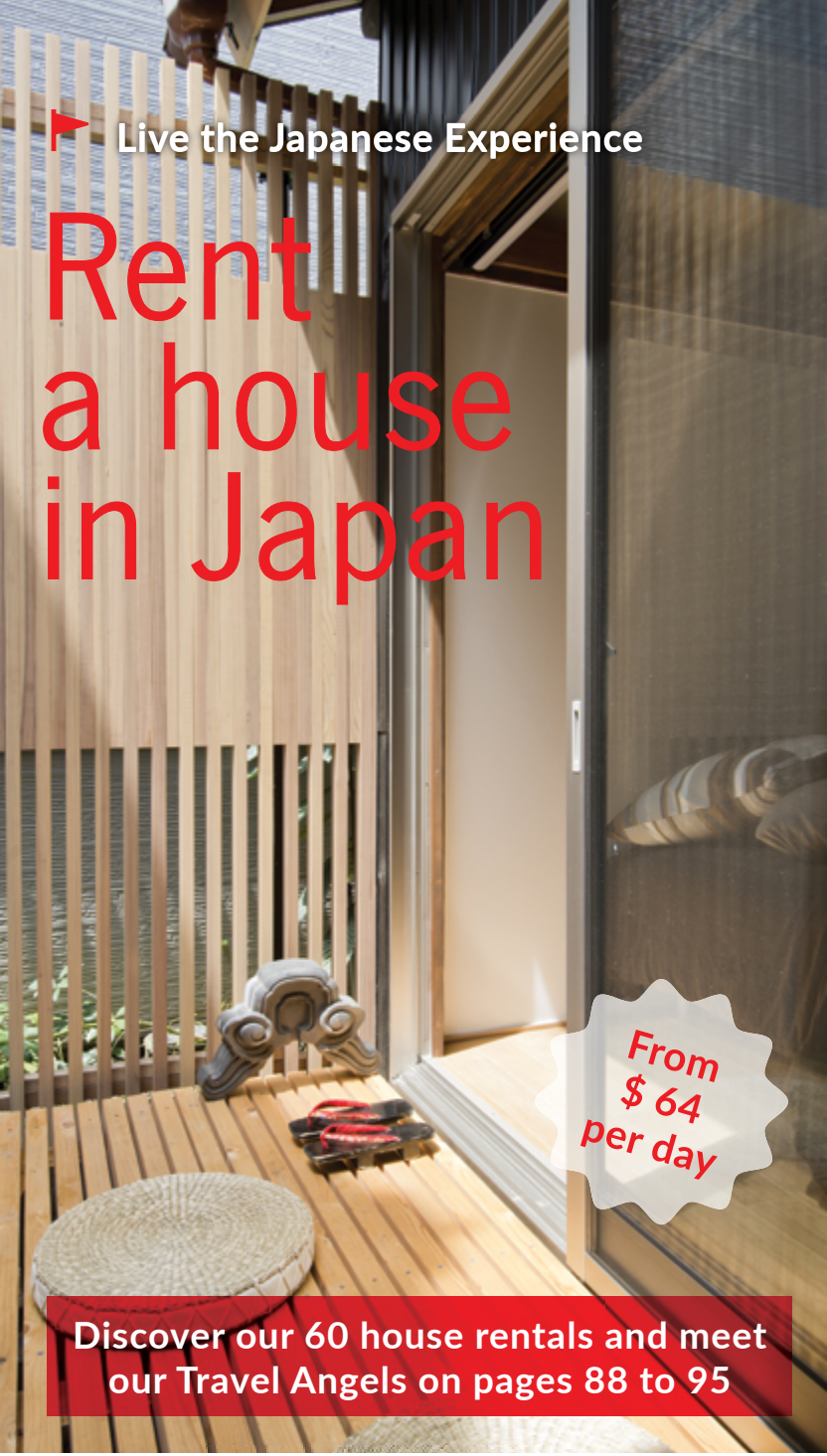
WHERE TO EAT

HIYORI 旬彩 ひより A restaurant focusing on fresh vegetables served in big lunch sets. From JR Nara Station, take the east exit, then walk south down the main road past the post office and take a left. Hiyori is on the right, a 5-minute walk past the first traffic light.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.
07-4224-1470
www.naramachi-hiyori.jp/menu/menu_e.html

EDOGAWA 江戸川 ならまち店 A popular restaurant serving many kinds of lunches but specializing in eel. From JR Nara Station, take the east exit, then walk south down the main road past the post office and take a left. Edogawa is on the left, a 5-minute walk past the first traffic light.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
07-4220-4400
http://r.gnavi.co.jp/k471700/lang/en/

HOW TO GET AROUND

To reach the temples you can take a bus in front of the station (East Side). It is the Nara Kotsu Loop Bus. There are 3 types of passes: 1 day Pass ¥500, 1 day Pass Wide ¥1000 and a 2 day Pass ¥1500. To reach the Heijo Palace Site, the bus departure is on the West Side of the station.



Japan experience

https://www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-japan

Osaka

Though Osaka has no shortage of tourist sites, it is the city itself that is the greatest attraction. Locals are known to be the country's friendliest and most outgoing people — you cannot fail to notice this while strolling along the streets of the neon-lit Dotombori District (in the south of the city) or in the underground shopping labyrinth of the Kita District (in the north).

The massive Osaka Station, newly renovated and reopened in 2012, is a major hub for travel in Osaka. Depending on what train line you take, you may see signs for both Osaka Station (or just 'Osaka') and Umeda Station (connected to Hankyu and Hanshin Railways). These are both the same area, albeit a very large area. Osaka Station connects to the JR Osaka Loop line (see page 62), JR Kobe line, and JR Kyoto line. This one station will connect you to all of Kansai!

Umeda is the name of the Osaka city subway station, so if you're heading to Osaka JR Station on the subway, take the train to Umeda! You can take the Midosuji line to Umeda, or the Tanimachi line to Higashi-Umeda (east Umeda), and the Yotsubashi Line to Nishi-Umeda (west Umeda).

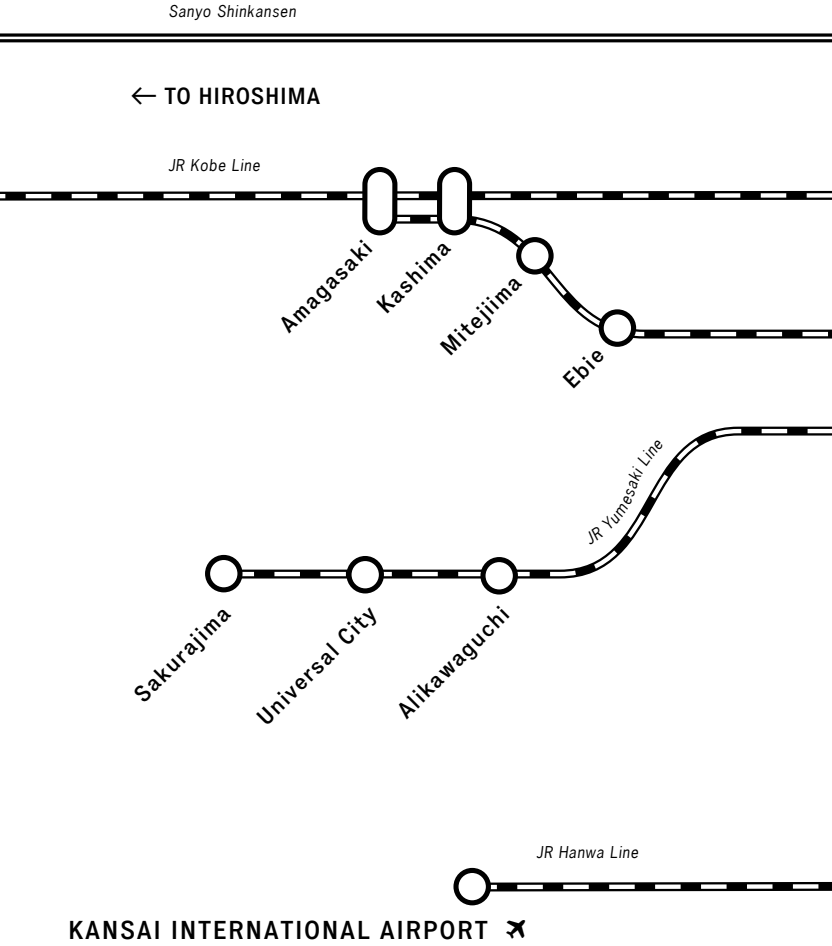
Osaka Station is also JR's big station, but it does not include the shinkansen. If you are using your Japan Rail Pass to ride the bullet train, be sure to go to the station Shin-Osaka. There is an express train (both the Kyoto Line Rapid Service and Special Rapid Service) connecting Osaka and Shin-Osaka stations, with only one stop between them, so it will be a very quick journey!

DISCOVER OSAKA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-osaka

Osaka (JR Loop Line)

35 km total, **59 min** fastest journey (full loop), **1 train** every 2 to 4 minutes
<**LOOP**>Timetables starts and end at Osaka. First train clockwise : **04:55** First train counterclockwise : **04:58** | Last train clockwise : **00:33** | Last train counterclockwise : **00:11**

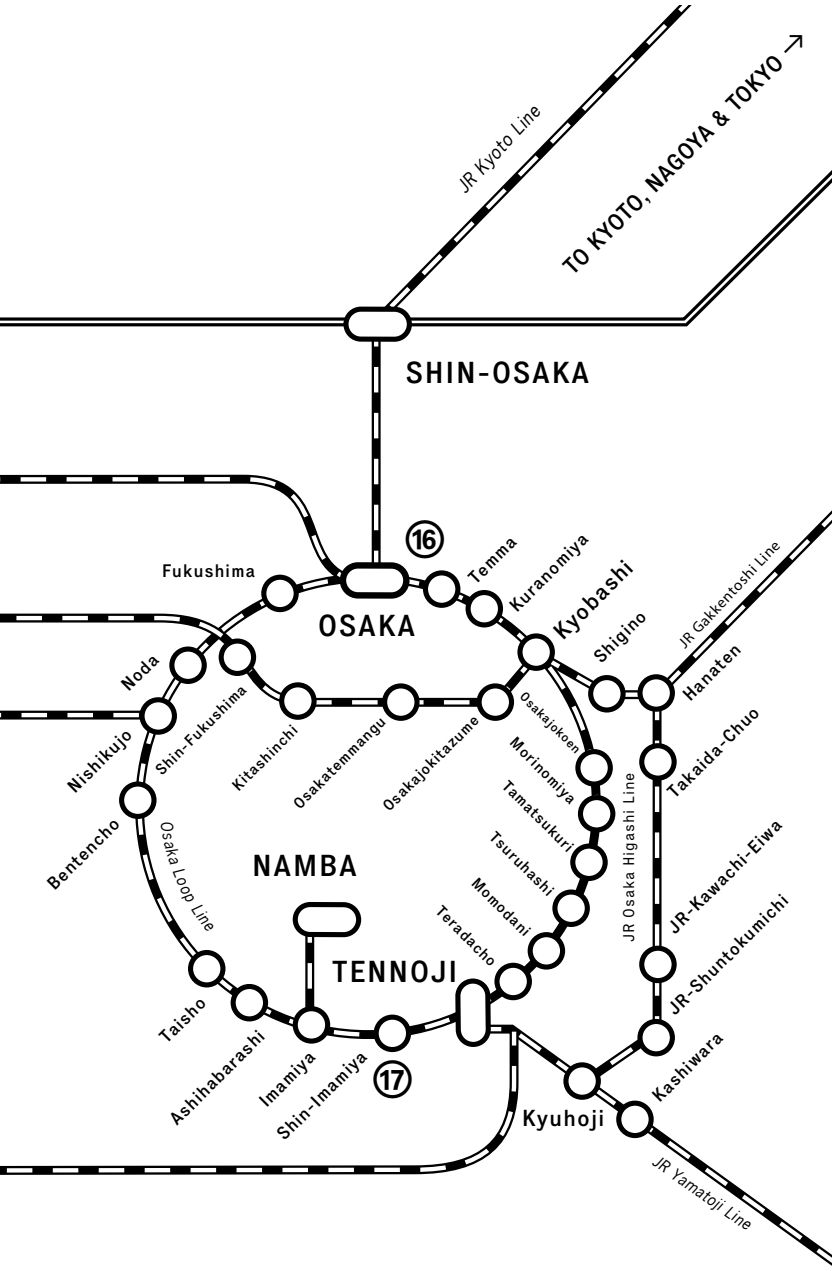
The Osaka Loop Line is one of many convenient train lines that run through the metropolitan Osaka area. Although it does not comprehensively cover all of the big attractions of Western Japan's largest city, this line provides fast and easy access to Osaka Station, Osaka Castle, Korean town (Tsuruhashi), and Tennoji.



Osaka Itinerary

⑯ **Osaka Loop Line** ..... page 64

⑰ **From Osaka to Koya San** ..... page 68



16 Osaka Loop Line

0 km

OSAKA STATION

Opened in spring 2013, Grand Front Osaka is a completely new district, developed north of Osaka Station. With skyscapers, offices and residential buildings, this district might not be the first place to visit for travelers, but it gives a great example of a modern Japanese city.

3.6 km

NISHIKUJO Take the JR Yumesaki Line here if you plan to visit the Universal Studios. Universal Studios Japan (USJ) was the first theme park under the Universal Studios brand to be built in Asia. Opened in March 2001 in the Osaka Bay Area, it occupies an area of 39 hectares and is the most visited amusement park in Japan after Tokyo Disney Resort.

5.2 km

BENTENCHO Gateway to Osaka aquarium, one of the world's finest aquariums.

7 km

TAISHO A 7-minute walk from the station will lead you to Osaka Dome, the city's gigantic baseball stadium, home field of the famous Orix Buffaloes team.

10 km

SHIN-IMAMIYA Shinsekai's nostalgic atmosphere makes it a must-see district in Osaka. Its Tsutenkaku Tower was built in 1912, inspired by the Eiffel Tower. These old-fashioned streets are the best place to try one of Osaka's best known specialties composed of various skewered and deep fried food, the kushikatsu. Choose night time to get a true feeling of the Shinsekai spirit.

11 km

TENNOJI Shitennoji can be reached by a 10-minute walk north of JR Tennoji Station. The temple is one of Japan's oldest and the admission to its outer grounds is free. Nearby you can stroll down the beautiful Gokuraku-jodo alleys. This ancient garden was designed based on descriptions of the Western Paradise of the Amida Buddha.

14 km

TSURUHASHI (Little Seoul) Have a taste of Korea in the bustling dowtown Tsuruhashi. The unique atmosphere of this place comes from the close connection that still exists between the district and Korea, as it can be seen while shopping in the international market or walking amid the legions of Korean food stands. Next to Tsuruhashi is also Uehommachi, a historical area, which is now one of the main transportation hubs for Iseshima and Nara.

16.7 km

OSAKAJO-KOEN Osaka is mostly famous for its vast parks covering about two square kilometers, where locals and visitors can find everything they need for their leisure time: plenty of grass areas, sport facilities and a shrine. The park is also one of Osaka's most popular hanami spots during the cherry blossom season. If you are visiting during this period, do not miss the Nishinomaru Garden (¥200), a lawn garden planted with more than 600 cherry trees. A tea house and the former Osaka Guest House provide beautiful views of the castle.

KYOBASHI change here for the JR Tozai Line.

21.7 km

OSAKA STATION

Osaka

WHAT TO SEE

NAMBA As the terminus of the JR Yamatoji Line, Namba Station is actually a group of different stations all located in the same place. You can find Nankai Namba Station, JR Namba Station and Kintetsu's Osaka Namba Station. And there is even more, since the Midosuji, Yotsubashi and Sennichimae Subway Lines stop at their respective Namba Stations too. Considered the southern center of Osaka, Namba is where everything happens, and the liveliest place in the whole city.

DOTONBORI is a district that never sleeps. You can pop into one of its numerous 24-hour restaurants whenever you wish. Also known as a food destination, this popular shopping and entertainment district is lit by thousands of neon lights. You can see the famous 'Glico' Running Man light sign and watch the giant Kani Doraku crab shining in the distance.

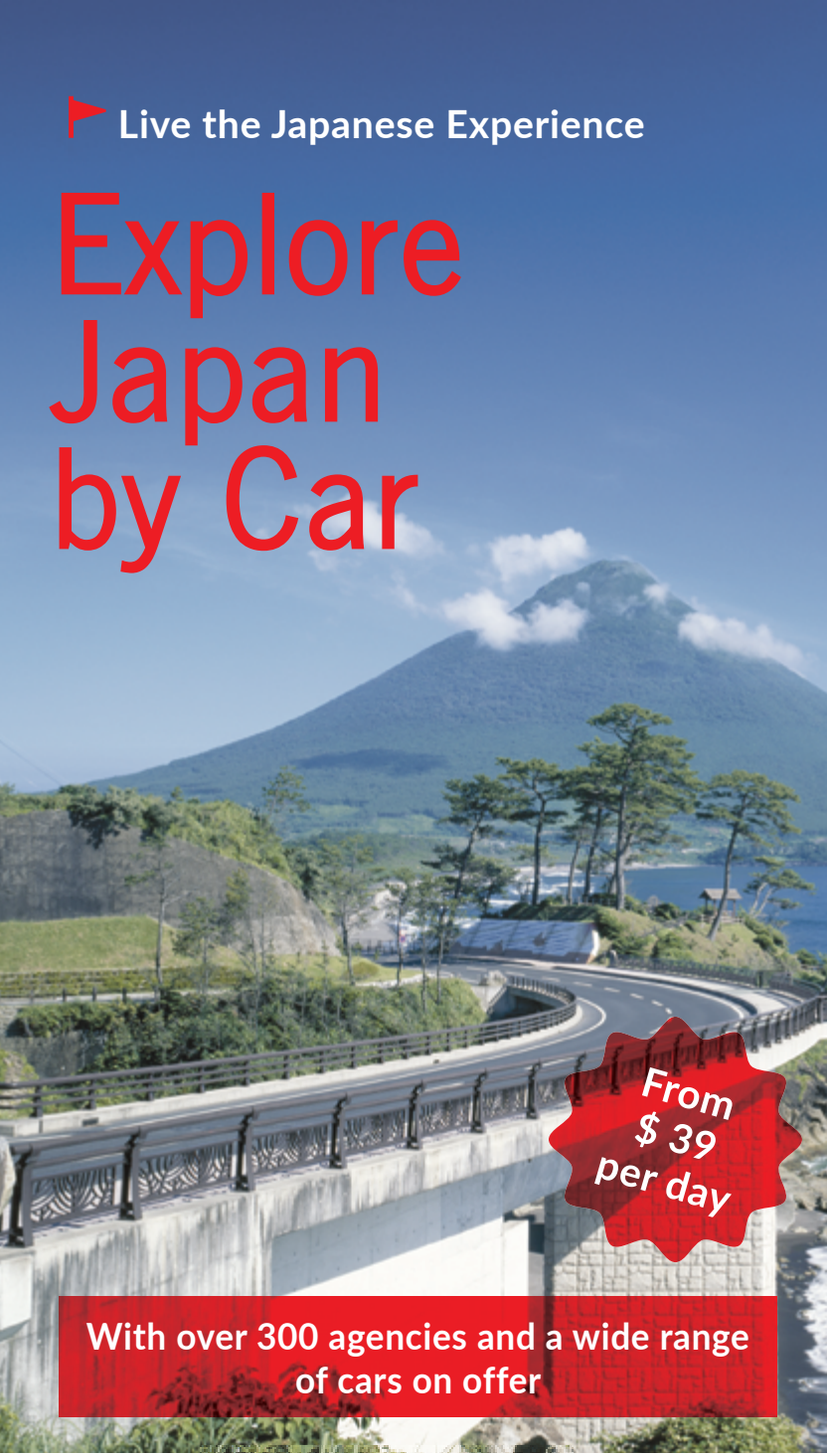
NATIONAL BUNRAKU THEATER To attend one of the famous Bunraku performances usually held in this theatre, choose to visit the city during one of the three-week runs that take place in January, April, June, July/August and November. Ticket prices vary by performance, but usually range from ¥2000-6000.

DEN DEN TOWN This electronic district located in the Nipponbashi area is in many ways comparable to Tokyo's Akihabara, with the advantage that here you can get a much better price. Den Den Town's stores are typically open around 10-11 a.m. and close around 7-8 p.m. and count numerous manga stores and cosplay cafes.

KITASHINCHI Those who are missing an authentic and lively atmosphere in Osaka will be pleased to visit the Kitashinchi entertainment district. Located just a few minutes south of the Kitashinchi Station on the JR Tozai Line, its streets filled with restaurants, bars and clubs will be a perfect break from the city's ultramodern environment.

OSAKA TENMANGU Very popular in Japan for its festival, the Tenmangu Shrine (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) is located just a short walk away from the Osaka Tenmangu Station on the JR Tozai Line. On July 24th and 25th, the shrine's divinty is presented on a mikoshi (palanquin) through the city, amid fireworks and laughter.

TENJINBASHISUJI SHOTENGAI A small distance away from the Shrine is the Tenjinbashi-suji Shopping Street, a two-kilometer, long covered shopping alley. You can buy almost everything there, from groceries to clothes and medicine. It reaches the Tenjinbashi Bridge in the south and starts from Tenjinbashi-suji Rokuchome Subway Station.



Japan experience

https://www.japan-experience.com/car-rental-japan

Osaka

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL ICHIEI A 3-minute walk from Namba Subway Station. The rooms are spacious, Japanese tatami rooms. Great for its charm and location.
1-6-8 Nambanaka, Naniwa-ku, Shinsaibashi, Osaka, 556-0011
06-6641-3135
www.hotel-ichiei.com/english

HOTEL MONTEREY GRASMERE One minute on foot from JR Namba Station, convenient for direct access to the airport.
1-2-3 Minatomachi, Naniwa-ku, Osaka, 556-0017
06-6645-7111
www.hotelmonterey.co.jp/en/grasmere_osaka/

CROSS HOTEL OSAKA クロスホテル大阪 A quiet and modern hotel located only five minutes away by foot from Dotonbori area and JR Station Namba.
2-5-15 Shinsaibashisuji, Chuo Ward, Osaka, 542-0085
06-6213-8281
www.crosshotel.com/eng_osaka

WHERE TO EAT

BOTEJU ぼてじゅう Just a short walk from the riverside Dotonbori shopping district, Boteju is well-known among the locals for its great okonomiyaki, Osaka's famous vegetable-filled pancake. From Namba Station exit 11, head north and turn right at the first street. Boteju's big red sign is on the second building on the right, just after a bank.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.
06-6211-3641
www.botejyu.com/shop/

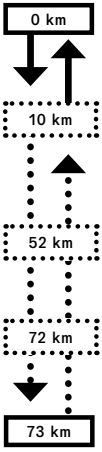
SHABU-TEI しゃぶ亭 Just around the corner from the giant, flashy Osaka Station is a small shabu shabu restaurant that's been around for ages, and it shows — the waitresses are in old-style apron uniforms and the walls are covered with signatures of celebrities who have passed through. Great shabu shabu dining with their delicious 'secret recipe' sauce. From Osaka Station, cross the street and continue west, turning left at Yotsuhashi-suji Street. Take the first right down a small side street, past a flashy big-name store. It's on the left down that alleyway.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 5 a.m., closes at 11 p.m. on Sundays
06-6346-5138
www.shabutei.co.jp/en

17 From Osaka to Koya-san

73 km total, **110 min** fastest journey, 2-3 changes, **2** trains per hour, **5** Ltd Express per day
< OUTWARD JOURNEY> First Train (D) **04:58** → (A) **07:43** | Last Train (D) **20:27** → (A) **22:47**
< RETURN > First Train (D) **05:36** → (A) **07:44** Last Train (D) **21:40** → (A) **23:34**

There are several ways to get to Koya-san from Osaka. Whichever you choose, keep in mind that the last part of your travel will be on a private train line separate from the JR. You will need to purchase a ticket for this part even if you have a Japan Rail Pass. Travellers with the Kansai Thru Pass, however, may ride the Nankai train lines for free to Mt. Koya. There is also a Koyasan World Heritage Ticket, which allows you to travel from Namba to Koya-san over 2 days for ¥3400, including cable car and buses.

** Please note that if you ride a Limited Express, you will have to purchase a Limited Express Ticket even if you have the 2 days pass.*
** Some areas of the railroad service between NAMBA station and KOYASAN station is temporary unavailable, but the substitute bus which bring passengers from HASHIMOTO station to KOYASAN station is running from the bus stop of HASHIMOTO station.*



OSAKA STATION

SHIN-IMAMIYA Shin-Imamiya Station is accessible by the Osaka Loop Line, which is part of the JR Pass. There are 5 limited express trains per day that will take you directly to Gokurakubashi (for ¥1650). It is also possible to take an express or rapid train (about ¥870) which usually makes a stop at Hashimoto Station.

HASHIMOTO Hashimoto is a little city in Wakayama Prefecture known for its persimmon. Limited express trains from Shin-Imamiya do not stop in Hashimoto.

GOKURAKUBASHI Once you have arrived at Gokurabashi, transfer to the cable car to the top station (about 5 minutes, ¥390) and then take a bus to Senjuinbashi, the city center (about 10 minutes, ¥290).

KOYA-SAN

Originally a monastery built away from Kyoto, Koya-san (or Mount Koya) is now a city of more than 100 temples and universities dedicated to religious studies, but also an important meditation place for a lot of pilgrims from all over the world. In 2004, UNESCO designated Koya-san as a World Heritage Site. Furthermore, it is the starting and ending point of the 88 temples of Shikoku pilgrimage. The area is also great to experience temple lodging ('shukubo').

Koya-san

A night spent in one of the mountain's 117 temples, with a superb dinner and breakfast of shojin ryori (the monks's ritual vegetarian gastronomy). Don't miss the chance to take part in early-morning prayers at this World Heritage Site.

WHAT TO SEE

KOYA TOWN The complex is small enough to go around on foot, so you will naturally run into its principal attractions, the first of them being the gigantic crimson Dai Mon (Big Gate) through which millions of visitors pass every year. In the center of Koya town stands the Danjo Garan's red pagoda with its brightly colored interior and its five seated, golden buddhas. East of town and surrounded by a forest, the Okuno-in or the Mausoleum of Kukai, Koya-san's founder, is a must-see.
Visitor information eng.shukubo.net

WHERE TO STAY

EKOIN 恵光院 Ekoin is located close to the Okuno-in Cemetery. Here you can experience Ajikan meditation and sutra writing.
497 Koyasan, Koya-cho, Ito-gun, Wakayama, 648-0211
07-3656-2514
www.ekoin.jp/en

SOUJI-IN 総持院 Souji-in allows you to experience a temple lodging in comfort and luxury. Surrounded by a Japanese garden, the rooms are prettily decorated with traditional paintings.
143 Koyasan, Koya-cho, Ito-gun, Wakayama, 648-0211
07-3656-2111
www.soujiin.or.jp

JIMYOIN 持明院 Enjoy a quiet stay in the spacious rooms of this temple, located only ten minutes away by foot from the Okuno-in Cemetery. The meals are vegetarian and prepared by the monks of the temple.
455 Koyasan, Koya, Ito District, 648-0211
0736-56-2222
www.koyasan-jimyoin.com/

WHERE TO EAT

HANABISHI 花菱 Eat as the monks do with a completely vegetarian set lunch. Located next to the Senjuinbashi bus stop.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. (5 p.m. in winter)
07-3656-2236
www.hanabishi-web.jp/content/oshinagaki.php

MIYASAN 宮さん Inexpensive Japanese food with an English menu. Located just across the road from Koya-san University, next to the post office.
Open 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., closed Sundays.
07-3656-2827

18 From Shingu to Osaka

277 km total, **245 min** fastest journey, **7** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First train (D) **06:30** → (A) **10:50** Last train (D) **17:55** → (A) **22:06**
<**RETURN**> First train (D) **07:33** → (A) **11:49** last train (D) **19:15** → (A) **23:51**

There are two direct limited express trains operating from Shingu to Shin-Osaka : the Kuroshio, which is the most frequent, and the Ocean Arrow, which is faster and has the advantage of having large, scenic windows. On this latter train, lounge seats (non-reserved) are the best spot to view the Pacific Ocean.

0 km

SHINGU

13 km

NACHI Only local trains stop here. Take a bus in front of the station and get off at Taki-mae to reach the sacred 133-m-high Nachi Waterfall.

15 km

KII-KATSURA An onsen town where the most famous of them, the Bokido hot spring (part of Hotel Urashima www.hotelurashima.co.jp) allows you to bathe in a cave while gazing at the Pacific Ocean.

95 km

SHIRAHAMA A popular summer vacation destination, yet too crowded in high season to be really enjoyable.

105 km

KII-TANABE As his statue next to the ocean reminds us, Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969), the founder of Aikido, was born here.

145 km

DOJO-JI Only local trains stop here. To get to the Dojo-ji Temple and its three-storey pagoda from the station, turn left on to the main road and take a right at the first junction. The temple is at the end of the street.

175 km

MINOSHIMA Part of Arida city, famous for its oranges and the cormorant fishing from June to September.

201 km

WAKAYAMA The JR Hanwa Line starts here. If you plan to reach Kansai International Airport, change here for a train running on this line.

227 km

HINENO To reach Kansai International Airport, you can also change trains at this station.

262 km

TENNOJI Get off at this station, which is part of the JR Osaka Loop Line (see p. 62), if you are going to Osaka Station.

277 km

SHIN-OSAKA

Osaka's Shinkansen station

Shingu

WHAT TO SEE

DORO GORGE is a valley ravine that offers a variety of breathtaking natural landscapes, such as dense virgin forests, steep cliffs, and oddly shaped rocks of various sizes. The scenery is particularly splendid in summer when flowers bloom on the rock faces and in late autumn when colored leaves cover the mountains. Visitors can enjoy a thrilling raft ride down the rapids (¥3340) on the Kitayama River flowing in the gorge.
Take a left as you leave Shingu Station to find the bus terminal. The valley is 40 minutes away from the city.

WHERE TO STAY

MOMOFUKU 百福 Run by a friendly retired couple, a welcoming small guest house with 4 rooms. You can enjoy local vegetables and fish prepared by the couple. 1 hour by bus from Shingu JR Station. 5-minute walk from Ogumotoiri-toge, 10-minute walk from Kogumotoiri-toge.
224-3 Nishi, Kumanogawa-cho, Shingu, Wakayama, 647-1206
07-3545-2016
www.kumano-travel.com/index/en/action_ContentsDetail_Detail/id75

KOGUCHI SHIZEN NO IE 小口自然の家 An old school that was renovated into a lodge. Located between Nachi and Hongu, it's a great place for an overnight stay on the way along the Kumano Kodo (Pilgrimage route). 1 hour by bus from Shingu JR Station. 5-minute walk from Ogumotoiri-toge. 10-minute walk from Kogumotoiri-toge.
398 Kaminagai, Kumanogawa-cho, Shingu, Wakayama, 647-1201
07-3545-2434
http://www.kumano-travel.com/index/en/action_ContentsDetail_Detail/id133

WHERE TO EAT

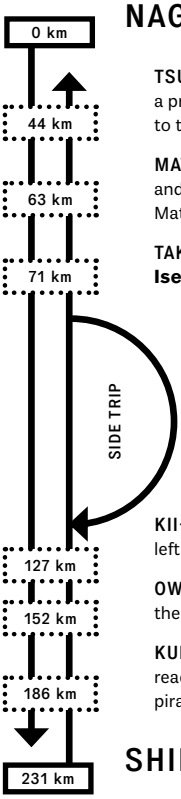
SHOUYA 創作居酒屋 清屋 Elegant but simple Japanese food at a reasonable price. From the station, turn left, then right onto route 42. Follow the road and turn left at Kumanomachi Michi, take the fourth left, and it is a bright yellow house on the left.
Open 5 p.m. to midnight. Closed Sundays.
07-3523-3090
hitosara.com/0006011421

19 From Nagoya to Shingu

231 km total, **209 min** fastest journey, **6** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **08:05** → (A) **11:34** | Last Train (D) **19:47** → (A) **23:14**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:20** → (A) **09:41** | Last Train (D) **17:30** → (A) **20:49**

From Nagoya, get on the Wide View Nanki Lex or on the Mie 'rapid' train, which is ironically much slower. If planning to visit the Grand Shrine at Ise, this last train might be more convenient since it directly connects Nagoya to Ise, although it is not as luxurious as the Nanki. Reserved and non-reserved cars are available on both trains.

** Please note that to ride the Wide View Nanki Limited Express or the Mie Rapid Limited Express Mie with a Japan Rail Pass you will have to pay an additional fare.*



NAGOYA

TSU A section of the track between Nagoya and Tsu is owned by a private company, Ise Railway. You will need to pay a small fee to the train conductor. (¥800)

MATSUSAKA A city where local cows are given beer to drink and body massages. Stop here to taste the beef that makes Matsusaka's reputation.

TAKI If you took the Nanki, change here if you plan to visit the **Ise Grand Shrine**. The Mie rapid train continues to Ise.

ISE-SHIMA NATIONAL PARK (see opposite page) Located 100 km south of Nagoya, this park is blessed with subtropical vegetation, small islands dotting its shoreline and the most revered Shinto shrine in Japan, the great Ise Shrine. Its bays and inlet are home to the famous Mikimoto pearl and consequently, pearl-cultivating rafts. Head for Ago Bay for the most scenic spots in the park.

KII-NAGASHIMA Shortly after leaving the station, look on the left side of the train for impressive boulders and small islands.

OWASE You can enjoy several glimpses of the coast in between the tunnels.

KUMANO-SHI Take a 5-minute bus ride from this station to reach Onigajo. The coves on its shore are said to be a former pirates' hideouts.

SHINGU

Ise

WHAT TO SEE

ISE JINGU With 6 million visitors each year, the Ise Grand Shrine is the spiritual home of the Shinto religion. This understated and uncluttered shrine is open daily, all day and has no entrance fee. A 10-minute bus ride (¥410) separates the outer Shrine (or Geku) from the inner Shrine (Naiku). Exit from the JR side of Ise Station, turn right and walk along the main road until you reach the shrine's entrance (8 minutes).
Open daily, 5 a.m. to 6 p.m., free.

MEOTO IWA The 'Wedded Rocks' are celebrities in Japan. You can gaze upon the two spouses, with their feet in the water and bound by a sacred rope, from a small sanctuary populated by stone frogs.
15-minute walk from JR Futaminoura.

WHERE TO STAY

ASAHIKAN 朝日館 This old ryokan was established 270 years ago. It offers a beautiful view of the Ise shoreline. All rooms have ocean views.
228 Futamicho Chaya, Ise, Mie, 519-0609
0596-43-2001
www.asahikan.jp

TOBA HOTEL INTERNATIONAL 鳥羽国際ホテル A luxurious hotel with wonderful ocean views. Take the shuttle bus from Toba station to the hotel, just three minutes away.
1-23-1, Toba, Toba-shi, Mie, 517-0011
0599-25-3121
http://www.tobahotel.co.jp/en/

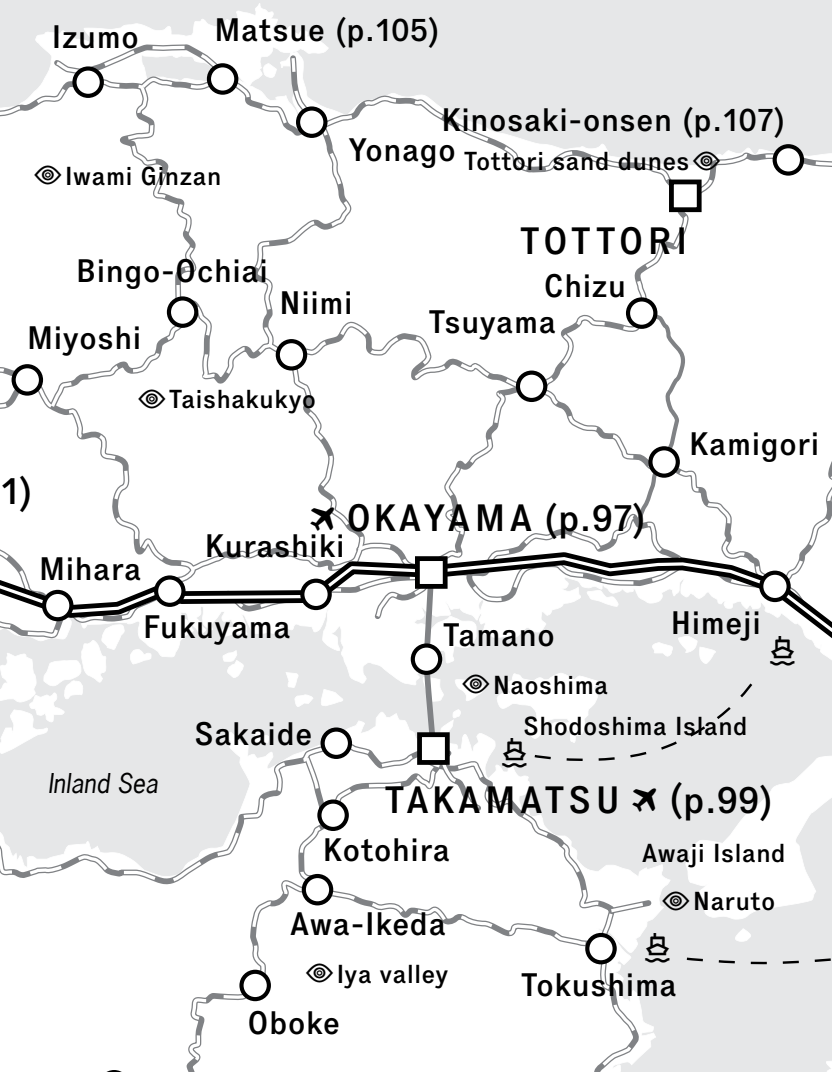
WHERE TO EAT

NIKENCHAYA 二軒茶屋 Located near the entrance to the Ise Grand Shrine, this restaurant serves various seafood dishes customized to accompany the local microbrew beer, 'Shinto Beer.' English menu available.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
05-9623-8773
http://www.kadoyahonten.co.jp/English/restaurant/

YAMADA やまだ A perfect place to stop for a bowl of Ise Udon noodles as you stroll through the Oharai Machi District on your way to the Ise Grand Shrine. Located on the right side of the street towards the end of Oharai-dori.
Open daily, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., closed Thursdays.
05-9625-1120

Gotsu
Masuda
Hagi
Tsuwano
Nagato-shi
Nishikicho
HIROSHIMA (p.10
Miyajima (p.102)
Shin-Yamaguchi
Yanai
Imabari
MATSUYAMA
Dogo onsen
Shikoku karst

Sanyo


Izumo
Matsue (p.105)
Kinosaki-onsen (p.107)
Yonago
Tottori sand dunes
Iwami Ginzan
TOTTORI
Bingo-Ochiai
Chizu
Niimi
Tsuyama
Miyoshi
Taishakukyo
Kamigori
1)
OKAYAMA (p.97)
Kurashiki
Mihara
Fukuyama
Tamano
Himeji
Naoshima
Shodoshima Island
Sakaide
Inland Sea
TAKAMATSU (p.99)
Kotohira
Awaji Island
Naruto
Awa-Ikeda
Iya valley
Tokushima
Oboke

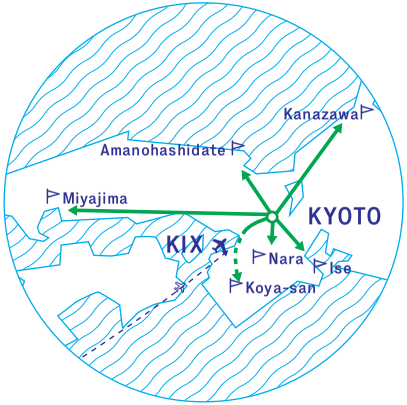
Itineraries

Find the perfect route
to make the best use
of your Japan Rail Pass.
Designed by specialists of Japan,
these 12 itineraries will help you
experience Japan in the most
enjoyable way.

1 7 days, 1 day each

VISITS RADIATING FROM KYOTO, TOKYO

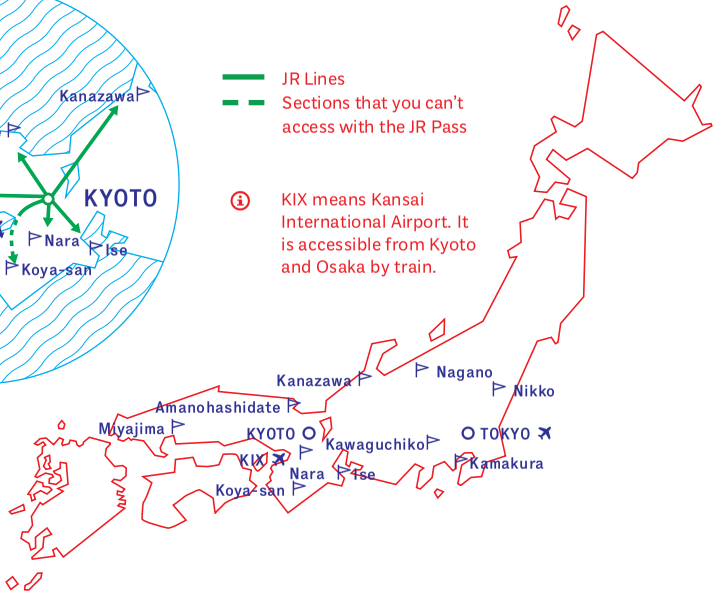
Those who do not like to pack and unpack their suitcases every day will prefer to settle in Kyoto or Tokyo and do most of their visits in a day. Japanese trains make it possible.

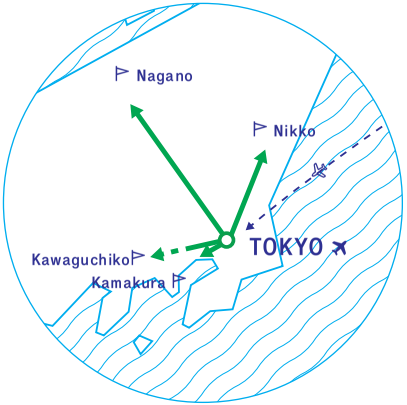


JR Lines

Sections that you can't access with the JR Pass

KIX means Kansai International Airport. It is accessible from Kyoto and Osaka by train.

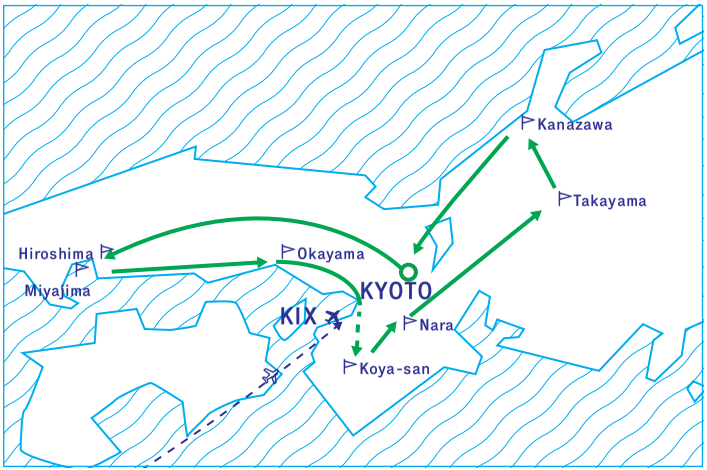




2 7 days, 1695 km

KYOTO-KYOTO

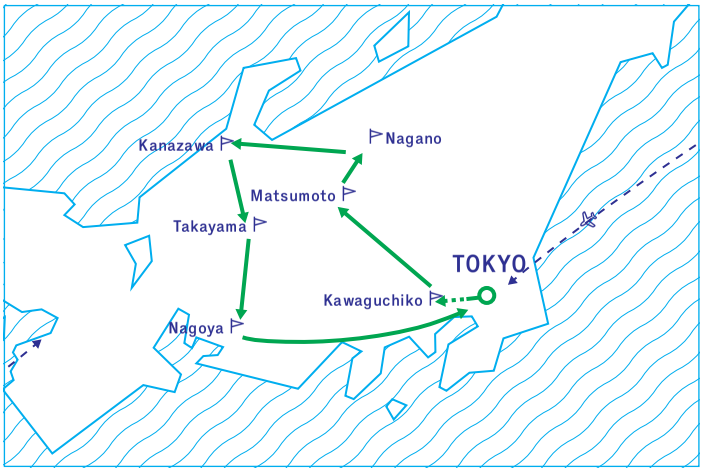
A busy, one-week itinerary to get a glimpse of the Japanese Alps (Takayama), the most important places of Japanese spirituality (Koya-san, Miyajima) and two of the most beautiful Japanese gardens (Kanazawa and Okayama).



3 7 days, 1260 km

TOKYO-TOKYO

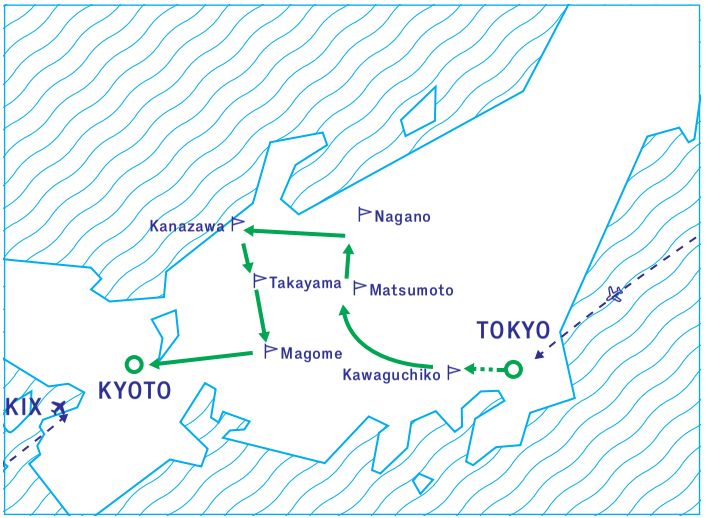
A week in the Japanese Alps and rural Japan. Recommended for the summer when the cities are overwhelmed by the heat.



4 7 days, 1206 km

TOKYO-KYOTO (OR VICE VERSA)

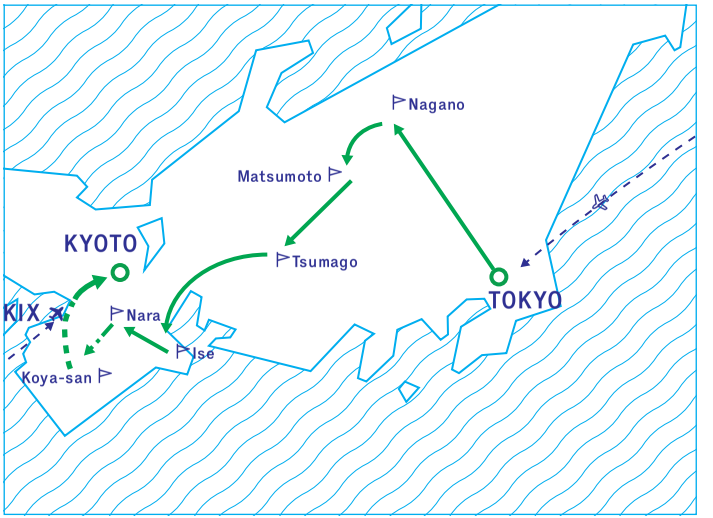
This itinerary links Tokyo and Kyoto via the Japanese Alps.



5 7 days, 924 km

TOKYO-KYOTO (OR VICE VERSA)

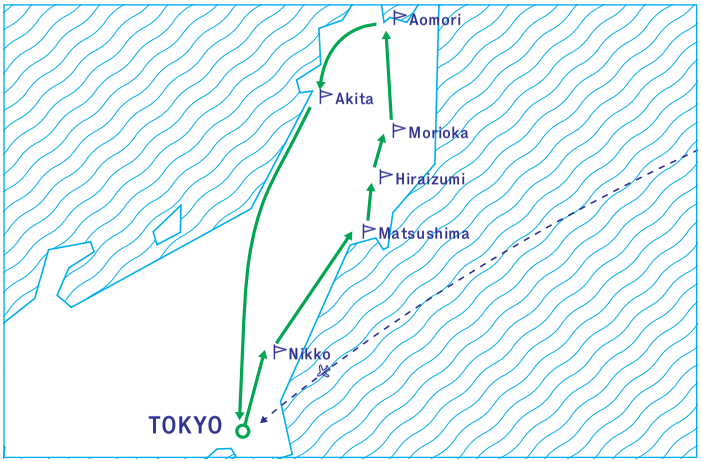
Reach Tokyo and Kyoto via three of the most beautiful sites in Japan (Ise, Koyasan and Nara). It is a nod to the Alps (Matsumoto and Nagano) as Japan itself is a mountain.



6 7 days, 1635 km

TOKYO-TOKYO

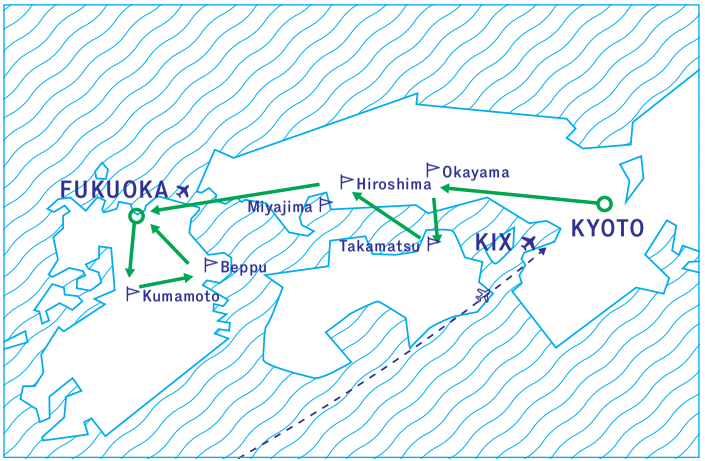
A week in Tohoku, a region particularly popular for its nature and cooler summer climate. Alternates between Shinkansen and country trains.



7 7 days, 1418 km

KYOTO-FUKUOKA (OR VICE VERSA)

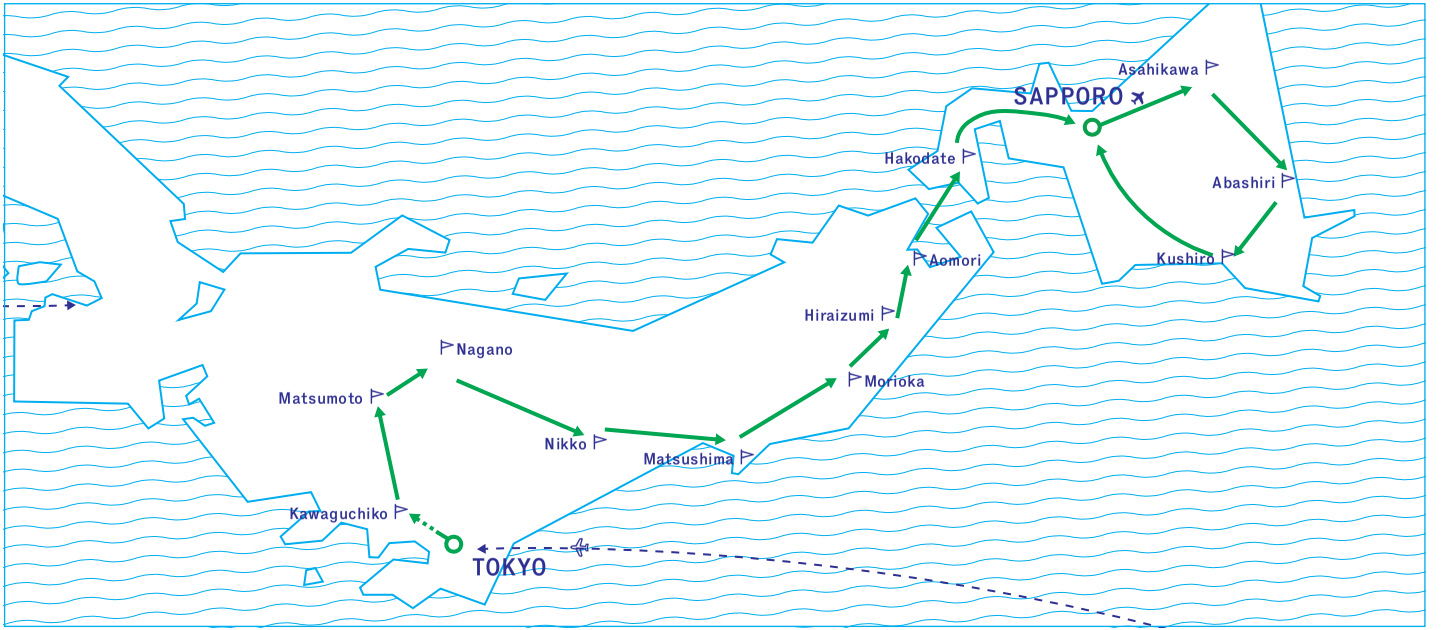
The opportunity to cross the Inland sea at Okayama to see Takamatsu, home of one of the most beautiful Japanese gardens (Ritsurin).



8 14 days, 2866 km

SAPPORO-TOKYO (OR VICE VERSA)

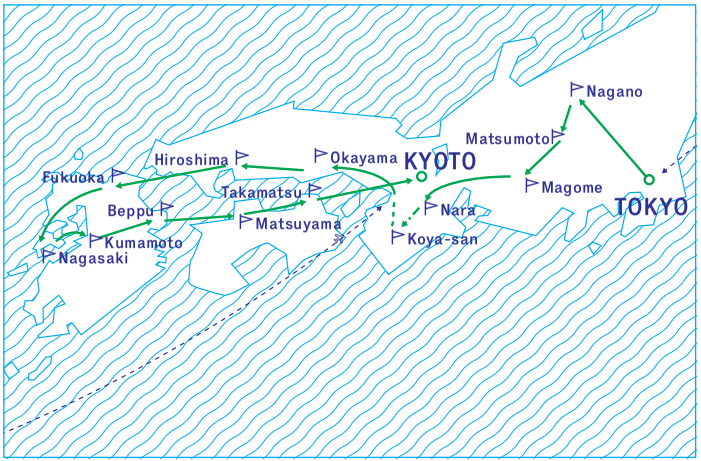
An ideal itinerary for exploring northern Japan.



9 14 days, 2800 km

TOKYO-KYOTO (OR VICE VERSA)

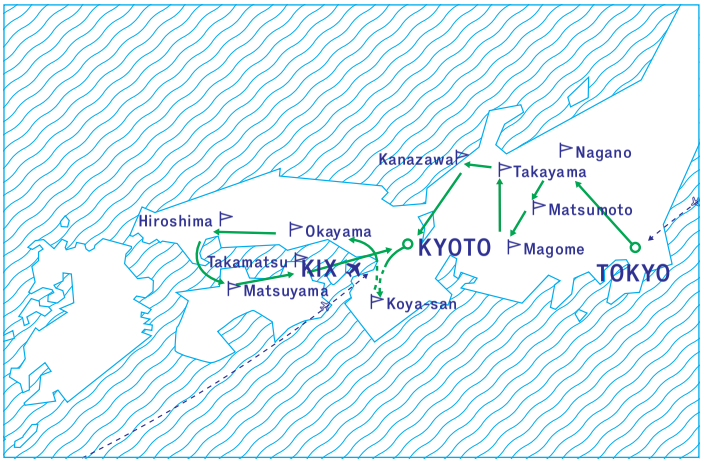
A fast-paced, fourteen-day itinerary! A concentrate of Japan, in addition to which it is advisable to stay in the two historical capitals of Japan, Kyoto and Tokyo, for full immersion!



10 14 days, 2137 km

TOKYO-KYOTO (OR VICE VERSA)

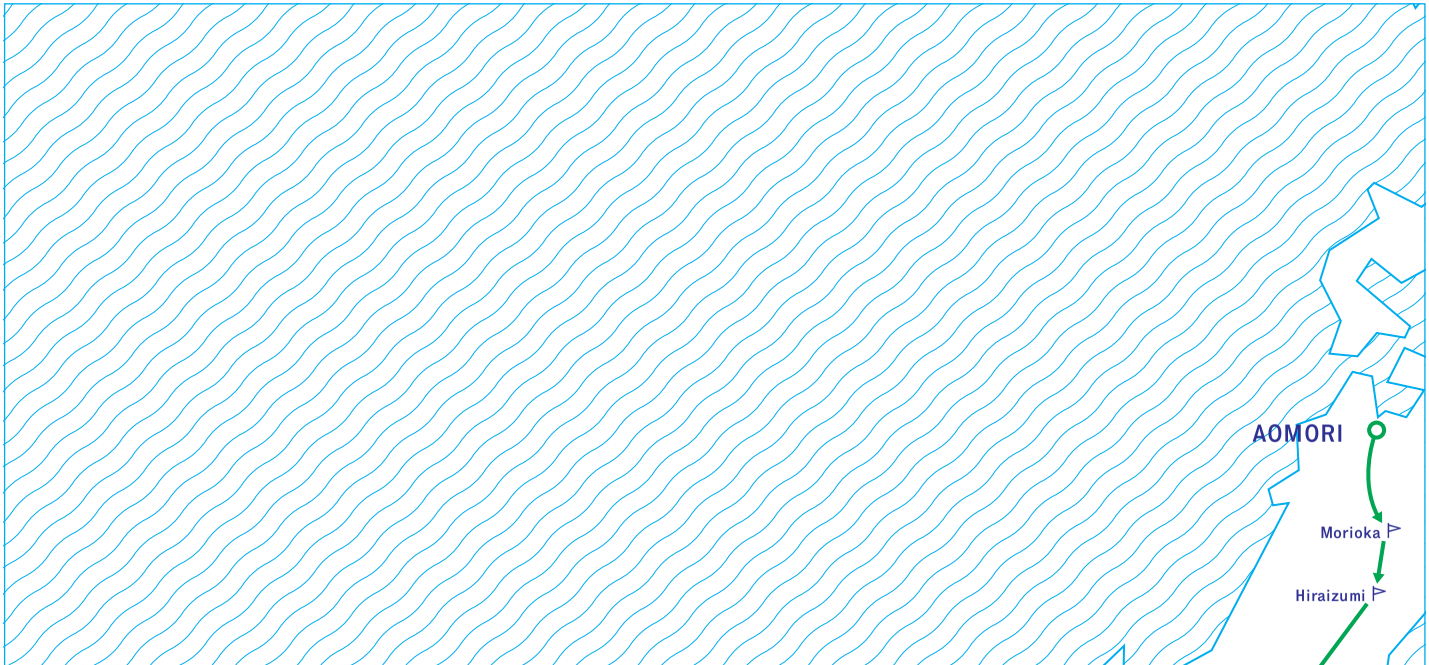
A variant of the previous itinerary, favoring the Japanese Alps. This tour should also be preceded or followed by stays in Tokyo and Kyoto to make the most of your trip to Japan.

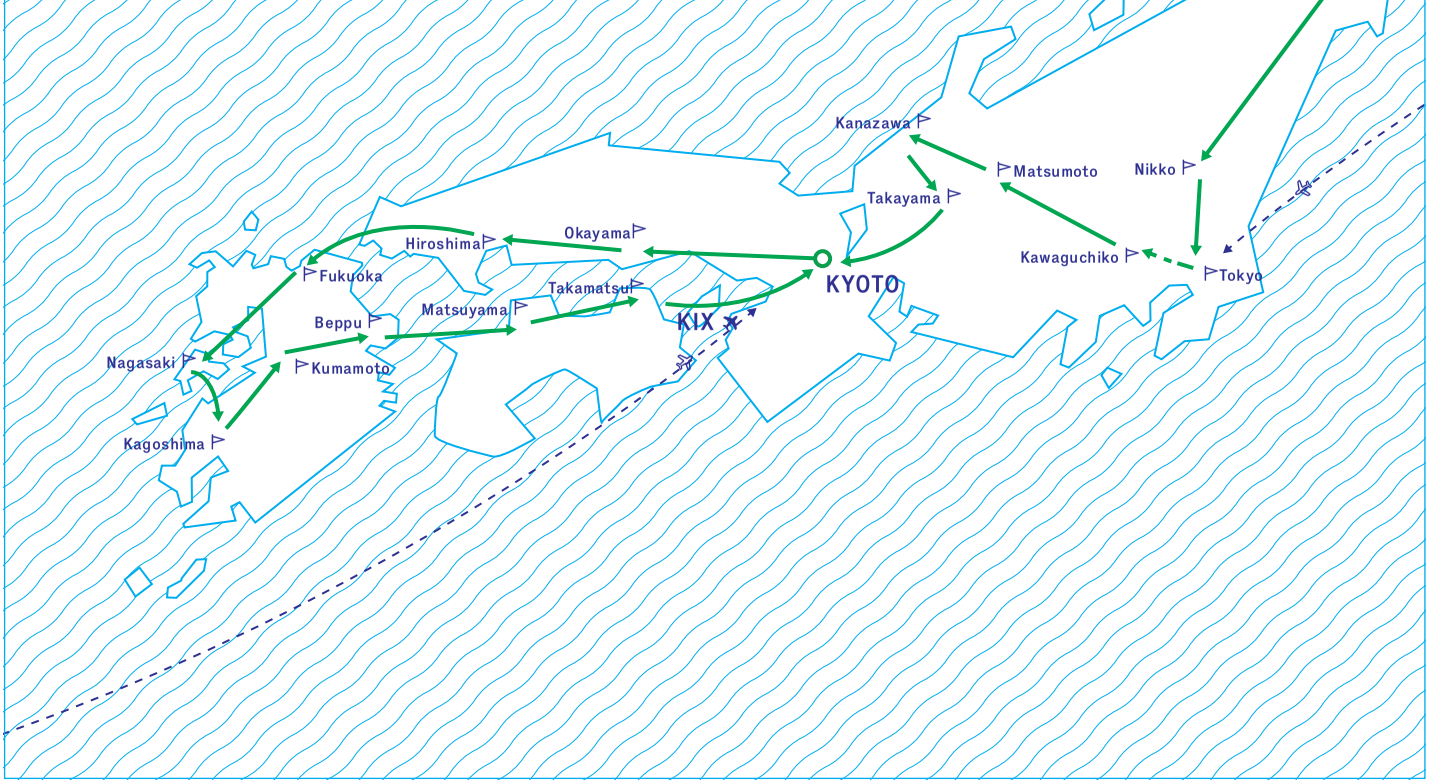


11 21 days, 4058 km

AOMORI-KYOTO (OR VICE VERSA)

A very comprehensive tour (which is only missing Hokkaido!), and even includes a boat crossing from Beppu to Matsuyama.

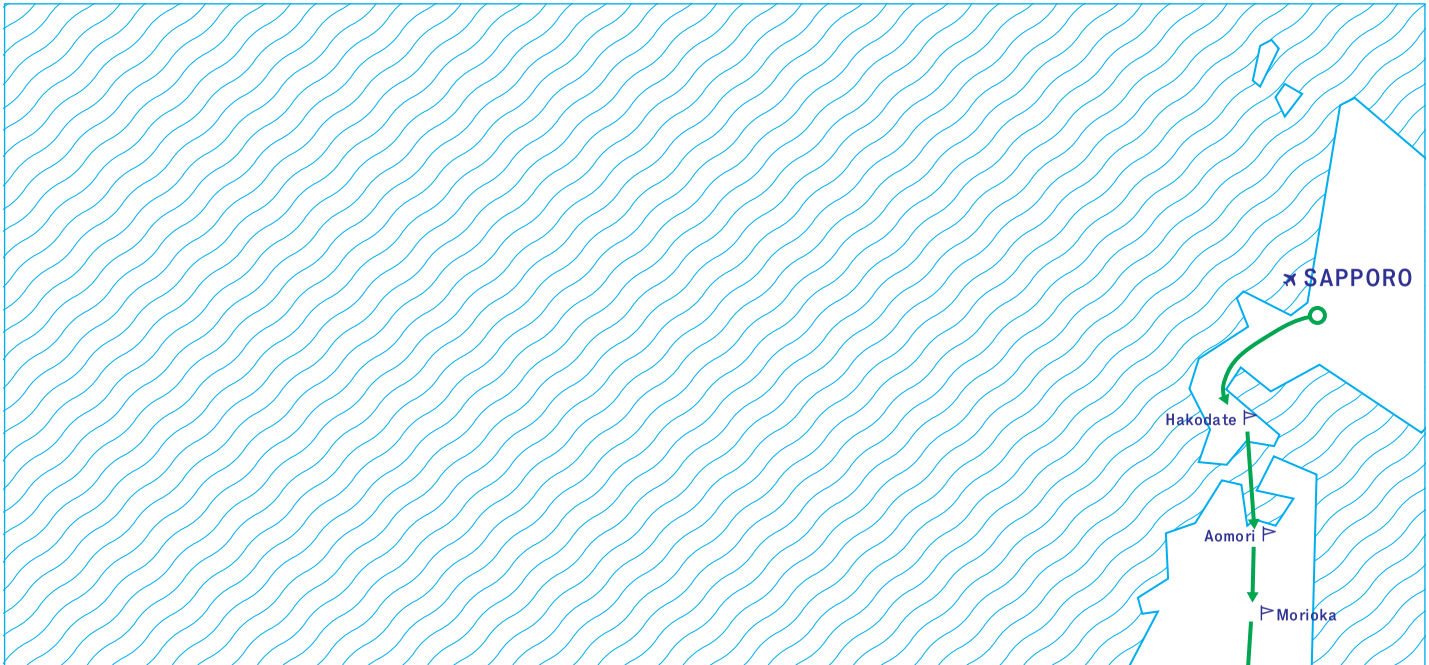


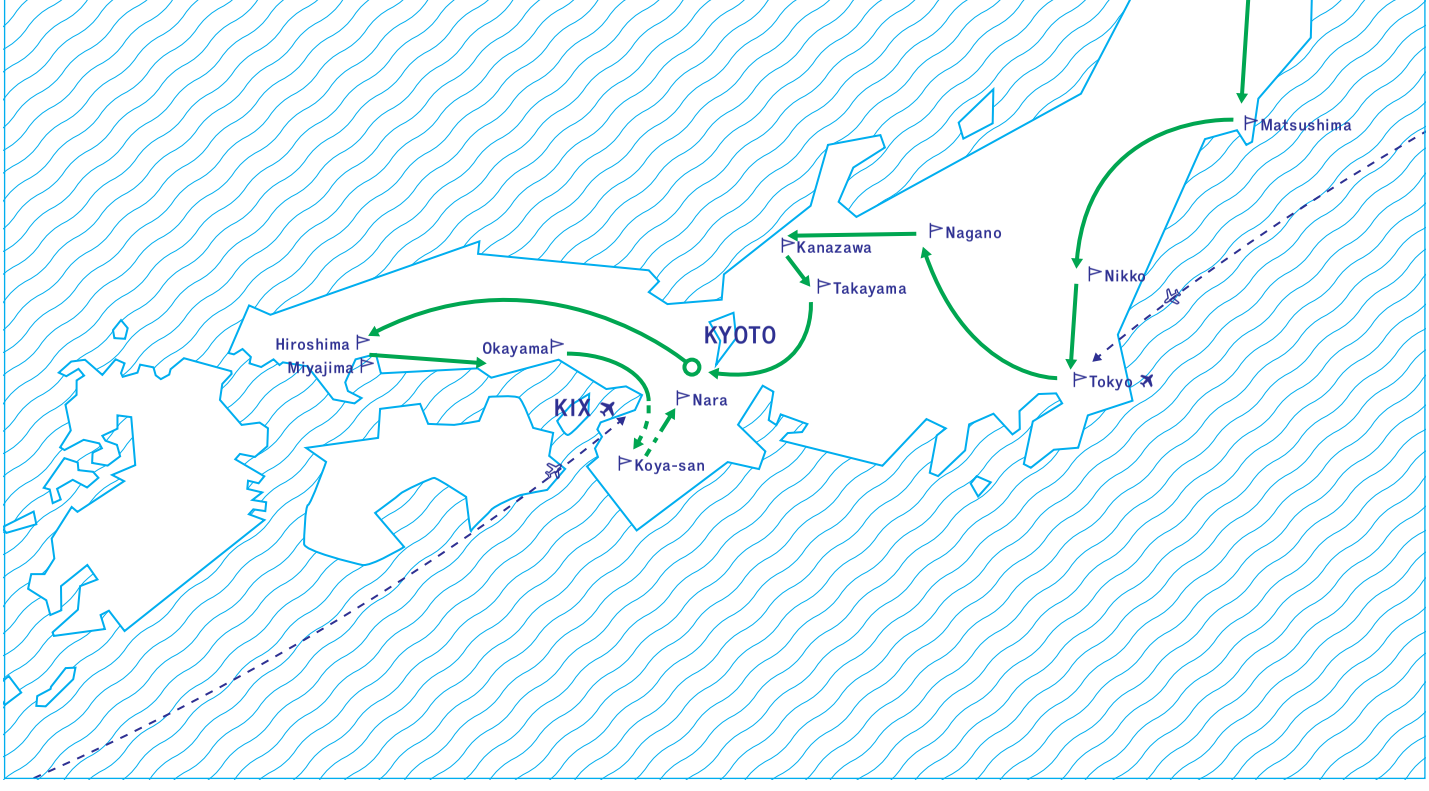

Kanazawa
Matsumoto
Nikko
Takayama
Okayama
Hiroshima
Fukuoka
Kawaguchiko
Tokyo
KYOTO
Takamatsu
Matsuyama
KIX
Beppu
Nagasaki
Kumamoto
Kagoshima

12 21 days, 3115 km

SAPPORO-KYOTO-HIROSHIMA (OR VICE VERSA)

A tour including a glimpse of Hokkaido,
as well as an exploration of the largest Japanese island, Honshu.




Matsushima
Nagano
Kanazawa
Takayama
Nikko
KYOTO
Hiroshima
Miyajima
Okayama
Tokyo
KIX
Nara
Koya-san

Houses for Rent

The train is a great way to travel across Japan, but at some point you will want to stop and catch your breath, so why not do so in Kyoto, Tokyo, Kanazawa, Fukuoka, Takayama or Hiroshima, in one of our traditional houses? They are located in the heart of each city, can accommodate 2 to 8 people and are an authentic and affordable way to experience life as a local.

Prices vary based on seasonal and exchange rate fluctuations.
Explore our houses at www.japan-experience.com

I love my job as a Travel Angel as it allows me to show travellers the art and the way of living in a traditional Japanese house. After a thorough visit of the house, I take them out to explore the district around it; both the essential amenities and the little restaurants that only the residents know. I will then give them all the advice I can about discovering the hidden and secret side of Kyoto that I love so much.

Saki, Travel Angel

Tokyo

All our houses in Tokyo:
www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-tokyo

IKEBUKURO NIGO HOUSE
Peaceful little house in residential area
29 m² — Max. 2 guests
From $93 / £74 per night

YUYAKE HOUSE
Comfort and peaceful
a stone's throw from Ikebukuro
44 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $90 / £112 per night

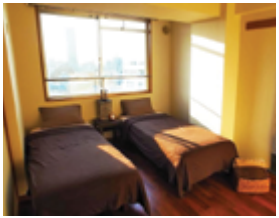
NISHIBI HOUSE
Large house close to
the Yamanote line
98 m² — Max. 7 guests
From $90 / £112 per night

TEMBO HOUSE
An apartment on the 9th floor of a
quiet building close to the city centre
45 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $90 / £112 per night

Tokyo

All our houses in Tokyo:
www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-tokyo

NISHI-IKEBUKURO HOUSE
Unparalleled view
over the urban landscape
44 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night



NAGAME HOUSE
A lovely little apartment
with balcony
44 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

NISHI-IKEBUKURO 2 HOUSE
Japanese apartment in the heart
of Ikebukuro
50 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

NISHI-IKEBUKURO 3 HOUSE
Space, comfort and convenience
57 m² — Max. 4 guests
From 133 / £106 per night

ASAYAKE HOUSE
Beautiful apartment
in an accessible district
62 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $139 / £111 per night

IKEBUKURO
Big house close to
the Yamanote line
98 m² — Max. 7 guests
From $165 / £132 per night

LAKEYAKI ZEN
A tea pavilion
in the heart of Tokyo
40 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $213 / £171 per night

AZUMA
Apartment close to the Asakusa
metro station
80 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $118 / £95 per night

Kyoto

All our houses in Kyoto: www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kyoto

GION HANAMIKOJI HOUSE
A japanese apartment,
ideal for a couple
36 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $79 / £64 per night

GION YASUIDORI HOUSE
Charming apartment, fully renovated
35 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $79 / £64 per night

GION KABURENJO HOUSE
Balcony with a view
of the Gion district
36 m² — Max. 2 guests
From $86 / £69 per night

NISHIKI GOKOMACHI HOUSE
Delicately decorated
with Japanese touches
28 m² — Max 2 guests
From $91 / £73 per night

ANRAKUJI HOUSE
A stone's throw from
the Philosophers' Path
52 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $98 / £79 per night

DEMACHI HOUSE
Beautiful house on the banks
of the Kamogawa River
51 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $98 / £79 per night

DEMACHI 2 HOUSE
A unique view of the Hose-ji temple
51 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $102 / £82 per night

GION HOUSE
Located in the Geisha
and the Maiko district
32 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $98 / £79 per night

Kyoto

All our houses in Kyoto: www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kyoto

GION MATSUBARA
A stone's throw from Gion and from Kiyomizu-dera
32 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $98 / £79 per night

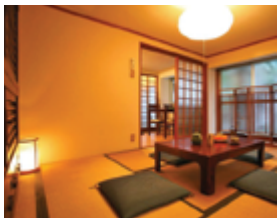
URAMON HOUSE
Pretty house in a typical lane
59 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $107 / £85 per night

HYAKUMANBEN
In the heart of the student district
62 m² —Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

HYAKUMANBEN 2
Sunlit house with a little flowered garden
60 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

JODOJI
View on Daimon-ji, the sacred mountain
62 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

KOYASU
Spacious house with peaceful little garden
73 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $113 / £90 per night



OKAZAKI
In the heart of a picturesque district
51 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

ROHJI
In a quiet area, near an old market
55 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $113 / £90 per night

Kyoto

All our houses in Kyoto: www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kyoto

GION ROKUDO
A mixture of Western
and Japanese comfort
63 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $116 / £93 per night

GION JIZO
Between Kiyomizu-dera and Gion
65 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $120 / £96 per night

SABI
Typical Kyoto aesthetics and comfort
80 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $120 / £96 per night

MACHIYA
Where the Silver Pavilion will be your
neighbour
74 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $121 / £97 per night

MUNETADA
A house with traditional charm
59 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $121 / £97 per night

WABI
A cheerful, well located apartment
74 m² —Max. 4 guests
From $121 / £97 per night

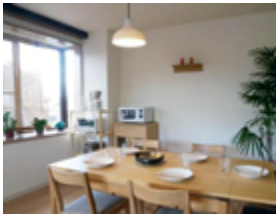
KAZURA
Cosy apartment in the historic centre
76 m² —Max. 4 guests
From $121 / £97 per night

GOJO MACHIYA
A combination of elegance and
tradition
59 m² —Max. 4 guests
From $133 / £106 per night

Kyoto

All our houses in Kyoto: www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kyoto

HANAMICHI
A haven of calm and serenity
75 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $133 / £106 per night



UMAMACHI
Large and modern family house
90 m² — Max 5 guests
From $143 / £115 per night

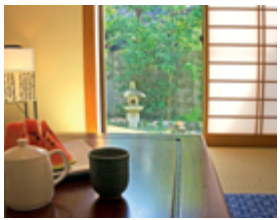
NISHI UME
Beautiful house with refined woodwork
60 m² — Max.5 guests
From $145 / £116 per night

REIKANJI
Japanese-style comfort and greener
91 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $152 / £121 per night

SHISHIGATANI
A cheerful and sunny apartment
90 m² — Max. 6 guests
From $152 / £121 per night

YOSHIDA
A house in a temple
82 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $152 / £121 per night

GION MACHIYA
Traditional house tastefully renovated
59 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $163 / £131 per night



SHINNYODO
View of a pagoda from the first floor
103 m² — Max. 8 guests
From $167 / £134 per night

Kyoto

All our houses in Kyoto: www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kyoto

TEPPANYAKI
Former restaurant transformed into a cosy apartment
74 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $167 / £134 per night

GINKAKUJI
Authentic early 20th-century machiya
72 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $175 / £140 per night

FUZEI
Authentic traditionally styled residence
68 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $181 / £145 per night

TERRAZZA
Luxurious big apartment with a terrace
150 m² — Max. 6 guests
From $230 / £184 per night

UTA YOMI DORI
Traditional house with beautiful interior design
110 m² — Max. 3 guests
From $258 / £207 per night

EIKANDO
Splendid and impressive 1930s house
120 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $261 / £209 per night

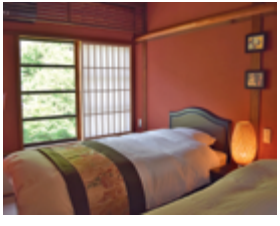
YASAKA
Traditional house, as comfortable as it is luxurious
80 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $385 / £309 per night

HONGANJI
An exceptional villa in the heart of Kyoto
200 m² — Max. 7 guests
From $467 / £374 per night

Kanazawa

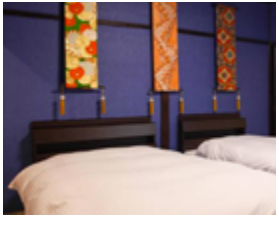
KENROKU HOUSE
Traditional,
machiya-style house
100 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $119 / £95 per night

SENNICHI
A stones's throw from the former Samurai district
62 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $145 / £116 per night



HARUNOYA HOUSE
Luxurious Japanese villa
60 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $172 / £138 per night

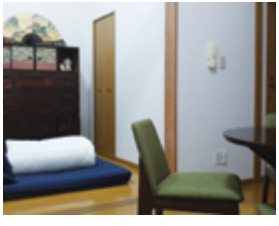
All our houses in Kanazawa:
www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-kanazawa



ABURAYA
a single-story machiya-style house located from Kanazawa
45 m² — Max. 4 guests
From $121 / £66 per night

Fukuoka

NAKASU HOUSE
Peaceful and bright in the heart of Fukuoka
From $72 / £58 per night



TENJIN
Spacious apartment
38 m² — Max. 6 guests
From $86 / £69 per night

All our houses in Fukuoka:
www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-fukuoka

Takayama

HIDA
Traditional house 3 minutes' walk from the historic centre
85 m² — Max. 5 guests
From $119 / £95 per night

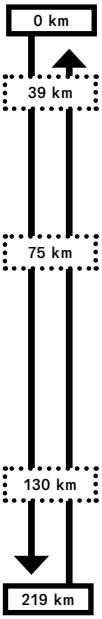
TAISHO ABURAYA
Western and Japanese styles.
99 m² — Max. 6 guests
From $175 / £95 per night

All our houses in Takayama:
www.japan-experience.com/rent-a-house-in-takayama

20 From Kyoto to Okayama

219 km total, **81 min** fastest journey, **3** trains per hour, change at Shin-Osaka
< OUTWARD JOURNEY BY HIKARI >
First Train (D) **05:21** → (A) **07:02** | Last Train (D) **22:13** → (A) **23:46**
< RETURN > First Train (D) **05:21** → (A) **07:02** | Last Train (D) **22:41** → (A) **00:09**

Okayama is the largest city in the Chugoku Region after Hiroshima. The city is an important transportation hub, being the location where the Sanyo Shinkansen meets with the only rail connection to Shikoku. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Nozomi).



KYOTO

SHIN-OSAKA Osaka City's shinkansen station.

SHIN-KOBE Kobe's shinkansen station is a good spot to watch the bullet trains speeding along, since the services that don't stop shoot straight past along the platform edge. A popular ropeway departs just next to the station. As it ascends, it passes by the Nunobiki Waterfall and the Nunobiki Herb Garden, giving a nice aerial view of both. The highlight of the ride lies in the observation deck located just beside the top station, which offers spectacular views of Kobe and is a popular night view spot. A further 20-minute scale up the mountain takes you to the middle station of Shin-Kobe Ropeway and the lower entrance of Nunobiki Herb Garden. This is one of Japan's largest herb gardens with hundreds of herb species and seasonal flowers.

HIMEJI Look on the right as the train reaches the station to see Himeji's magnificent Castle on a hill in the distance, widely considered to be Japan's most beautiful surviving feudal castle. The castle is designated both a national treasure and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

OKAYAMA

Okayama

WHAT TO SEE

KORAKUEN Korakuen, a spacious landscape garden, is the city's star attraction. The area covers both sides of the Asahi-gawa flowing through the city. Take a tram from the terminus outside the station, all the way down Momotaro-dori to Shiroshita (¥100). At this junction, head north until you see on your right a road leading across a bridge towards the entrance to the garden.
Open daily, 7.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. (8 a.m to 5 p.m. Oct-March), ¥400.

WHERE TO STAY

OKAYAMA KOORAKU HOTEL 後楽 Kooraku is located a 10-minute walk from JR Okayama Station and close to the central part of the town. It is well located for visiting sites in Okayama and areas surrouding Okayama City. Okayama is a great place to stay as a gateway to visit other cities, as you have easy access to many of Japan's major cities, such as Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya etc. Also a good place to stay as a stop over to visit the Seto-no-uchi islands.
5-1 Heiwa-cho, Kita-ku, Okayama, 700-0827
08-6221-7111
pwww.hotel.kooraku.co.jp/english

HOTEL GRANVIA OKAYAMA ホテルグランヴィア岡山 Situated close to Okayama Station with Okayama Castle and Korakuen Garden easily accessible. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
1-5 Ekimoto-machi, Kita-ku, Okayama, 700-8515
08-6234-7000
granvia-oka.co.jp/english

MITSUI GARDEN HOTEL OKAYAMA 三井ガーデンホテル岡山 With a public bath looking out on a Japanese garden, this hotel is a two minute walk from JR Okayama train station.
1-7 Ekimoto-machi, Kita-ku, Okayama, 700-0024
086-235-1131
https://www.gardenhotels.co.jp/okayama/eng/

WHERE TO EAT

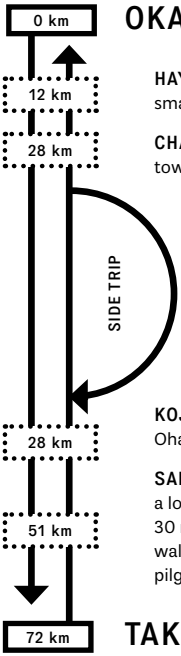
TEPPAN KU-YA テッパン クウヤ Simple and delicious Japanese food with an English menu. Walk east from the station down Momotaro-dori. It's on the left just after you cross a small river.
Open daily, 6 p.m. to midnight, closed Sundays.
08-6224-8880
teppan-ku-ya.com

GINPACHI すし茶屋銀八 Great sushi in generous portions. Just north-east of Okayama Station, across the street from a small clinic.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., 4:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.
08-6226-3848
www.ginpachi.com

21 From Okayama to Takamatsu

72 km total, **52 min** fastest journey, **2** trains per hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:27** → (A) **06:31** | Last Train (D) **00:12** → (A) **01:21**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **04:35** → (A) **05:45** | Last Train (D) **23:29** → (A) **00:38**

If you are coming to Shikoku from Honshu, your first stop will probably be Takamatsu, the capital of Kagawa prefecture. Take the Marine Liner rapid train along the Seto-Ohashi Line, which runs direct to Takamatsu across the scenic Seto-Ohashi Bridge. The bridge, or rather the series of bridges jumping from islet to islet, opened in 1988, spans 9.4 km and took nearly a decade to build.



OKAYAMA

HAYASHIMA Part of the Okayama urban agglomeration, it is its smallest yet most populated district.

CHAYAMACHI Stop here and change for the JR Uno Line towards Uno, if you plan to visit Naoshima.

NAOSHIMA Naoshima Island is accessible from Uno Port on mainland Honshu and Takamatsu Port on Shikoku. Once you are on the island, there are many open-air installations as well as art museums and interesting architecture to see. It is well worth staying for a night on the island, with options ranging from 5 star to Yurts. Renting a bicycle is one of the best ways to get around.

KOJIMA Last stop on Honshu before the train crosses the Seto-Ohashi Bridge.

SAKAIDE Change here if you want to visit the Kokubun-ji. Take a local train to Kokubu (service operates approximatively every 30 minutes), it is an 11-minute trip. Kokubu Station is a 5-minute walk away from the Kokubun-ji, the 80th temple of the Shikoku pilgrimage. The entrance is just off the main road on the left.

TAKAMATSU

Takamatsu

WHAT TO SEE

RITSURIN GARDEN Takamatsu combines urban verve with relaxed down-home atmosphere. Stop at Ritsurin Garden to taste a slice of it. Japan's largest Cultural Heritage Garden, incorporates the pine-clad mountain into its overall visual design. Six spring-fed ponds (home to some 3 000 koi carp) and 13 small hills representing miniaturized landscapes, can be divided into 2 parts: a classical southern garden and a modern northern garden with wide grassy lawns and huge lotus ponds.
Take a train heading for Tokushima and get off at Ritsurin-Koen Kita Guchi, turn right out of the station, follow the tracks to the first street, and turn right (4 minutes).
Open daily, from dawn to dusk, ¥410.

WHERE TO STAY

DAIWA ROYNET HOTEL TAKAMATSU ダイワロイネットホテル高松
A very new, clean hotel with lots of extra amenities, including bike rental! A 15-minute walk from the station.
8-23 Marugame-cho, Takamatsu, Kagawa, 760-0029
08-7811-7855
https://www.daiwaroynet.jp/english/takamatsu/

GUEST HOUSE CHOTTOCO-MA ちょっとこま A quirky guesthouse with friendly owners fluent in English. Two minutes away from Showamachi Station, the station just after Takamatsu.
3-7-5 Ougi-machi, Takamatsu, Kagawa, 761-0013
(no telephone, visit their website)
chottoco-ma.com/eng/eng.html

JR HOTEL CLEMENT TAKAMATSU JR ホテルクレメント高松
This 20-storey luxury hotel is located in Sunport Takamatsu. The rooms command a view over the Seto Inland Sea and the city. The hotel provides with a large choice of restaurants.
1-1 Hamanocho, Takamatsu,Kagawa 760-0011
08-7811-1111
https://www.jrclement.co.jp/takamatsu/en/

WHERE TO EAT

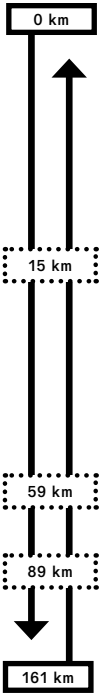
CHIKUSEI 竹清 Kagawa Prefecture is renowned for its udon, and Chikusei is widely known as Takamatsu's best udon in all varieties. From Takamatsu Station, walk south down Kencho-mae-dori and turn right at the third traffic light.
Open 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., closed Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.
087-862-1095
http://chikuseiudon.com/

IKKAKU 一鶴 A popular and delicious restaurant chain found all over Kagawa Prefecture serving Japanese-style chicken wings. Four traffic lights south of Takamatsu Castle and Takamatsu Station, to the east.
Open 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. weekdays, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekends.
08-7823-3711
http://www.ikkaku.co.jp/takamatsu/menu.html

22 From Okayama to Hiroshima

161 km total, **61 min** fastest journey by Hikari, **1** trains every 2 hours
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY BY HIKARI, KODAMA OR SAKURA** >
First Train (D) **06:10** → (A) **07:11** | Last Train (D) **22:37** → (A) **23:44**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:13** → (A) **07:27** | Last Train (D) **22:23** → (A) **22:37**

Of particular interest to Japan Rail Pass holders in Hiroshima is the JR-operated loop bus for tourists, called Maple-oop (combination of Maple and Loop). The bus connects Hiroshima Station with the area around Shukkeien, Hiroshima Castle and the Peace Memorial Park every 30 minutes and is covered by the Japan Rail Pass. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Nozomi or the Mizuho).



OKAYAMA

KURASHIKI Just south of JR Kurashiki Station is a beautiful streetscape of storehouses and merchant homes. The Bikan Chiku historical area, Honmachi and Higashi-machi, stretch just a short walk from the Kurashiki-gawa River, and it is here that you can find attractive traditional buildings full of local color. These buildings have long been related to the livelihoods of the local people, and include old storehouses that have been remodeled into cafes, inns and bars. The Bikan Chiku District is also home to the Ohara Museum of Art and beautiful, historical buildings, and has grown into one of the great tourist spots in the prefecture. Two small tourist boats are always cruising along the Kurashiki-gawa from which, during the daytime, visitors can enjoy a view of the riverbanks while experiencing a gondola-style boat ride, called the 'Kurashiki Kawabune Nagashi'. When it gets dark, the streets are bathed in a soft light making the area enjoyable at night time as well.

FUKUYAMA As the train arrives look out on the right for a glimpse of Fukuyama Castle.

MIHARA The nearest station to the Buttsu-ji, known as one of the best Zen schools in Japan. This group of temples is nestled in the midst of a dense cedar grove, making it a perfect spot to enjoy the magnificent blazing colors of autumn in Japan.

HIROSHIMA

Hiroshima

WHAT TO SEE

PEACE MEMORIAL PARK Nowadays, it is hard to imagine that the city was the scene of such horror less than 70 years ago. The Peace Memorial Park lies in the center of the city and keeps alive the memory of what made Hiroshima so sadly famous. From Hiroshima Station's south side, take streetcar N°2 or 6 to the Genbaku-Domu-mae stop, which is just north of the park (station's number: M10 - 15 min). It takes about 10 minutes to walk from its northern end to the Peace Memoral Museum (daily 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥50), where a highly emotional visit awaits you.

HIROSHIMA CASTLE Destroyed during the bombing of the city in 1945, the castle was entirely rebuilt from its ashes. A ten minute walk from Kamiyacho-michi or Kamiyacho-higashi tram stop (12 min, ¥160 from Hiroshima Station by lines 1, 2 or 6). It takes 15 minutes to get from there to the Peace Park. (Dec-Feb: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mar-Nov: 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., ¥370).

DISCOVER HIROSHIMA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-hiroshima

MIYAJIMA (see p.102)

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL GRANVIA HIROSHIMA ホテルグランヴィア広島
A luxury hotel that is directly connected to JR Hiroshima Station. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
1-5 Matsubara-cho, Minami-ku, Hiroshima, 732-0822
08-2262-1111
www.hgh.co.jp/english

ANA CROWNE PLAZA クラウンプラザホテル広島
15 minutes by taxi from Hiroshima Station, located at the heart of the city. Convenient location for sightseeing, close to the Memorial Peace Park and the shopping and food district of the city.
7-20 Naka-machi, Naka-ku, Hiroshima, 730-0037
08-2241-1111
www.anacrowneplaza-hiroshima.jp/language/english

WHERE TO EAT

REI-CHAN 麗ちゃん Hiroshima-style okonomiyaki (Hiroshima-yaki for short) is one local speciality you can't miss. Rei-chan has a branch just in front of the station, and another one on the 2nd floor of the station, in the Asse Building.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
08-2286-2382
www.o-reichan.jp

HOW TO GET AROUND

Hiroshima has got a very practical tram network with 8 lines throughout the city. Each stop is identified by a letter and a number. Some cars are quite old and very charming. One day pass costs ¥600. Hiroshima city also offers a bike rental system with 17 stations. One day pass: ¥1080.

23 Miyajima

WHAT TO SEE

ITSUKUSHIMA SHRINE Easily reached in about 40 minutes from Hiroshima, Miyajima is a treasure of an island only 2 km (1 ¼ miles) off the mainland in the Seto Inland Sea. No doubt you've seen pictures of its most famous landmark, a huge red torii, or shrine gate, rising out of the water. Erected in 1875 and made of camphor wood, it is one of the largest torii in Japan, measuring more than 16 m (53 ft.) tall. It guards Miyajima's main attraction, Itsukushima Shrine, designated a World Heritage Site in 1996. It is ranked one of the three most scenic spots in Japan.
Open daily, 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥300.

MOMIJIDANI KOEN Momijidani Koen (Red Maple Valley Park) is one of the most famous maple leaf valley parks in Japan. The park is located at the foot of Mt. Misen, along Momijidani River, behind Itsukushima Shrine. In autumn, the blazing colors of the valley are truly breathtaking.

DISCOVER MIYAJIMA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-miyajima

WHERE TO STAY

IROHA RYOKAN 蔵宿いろは Located in Miyajima's Omotesando Avenue, a five minute walk from Itsukushima Shinto Shrine and Miyajima Pier. The hotel offers a restaurant and Japanese-style rooms with free internet access.
589-4 Miyajimacho, Hatsukaichi, Hiroshima, 739-0559
08-2944-0168
www.visit-miyajima.jp

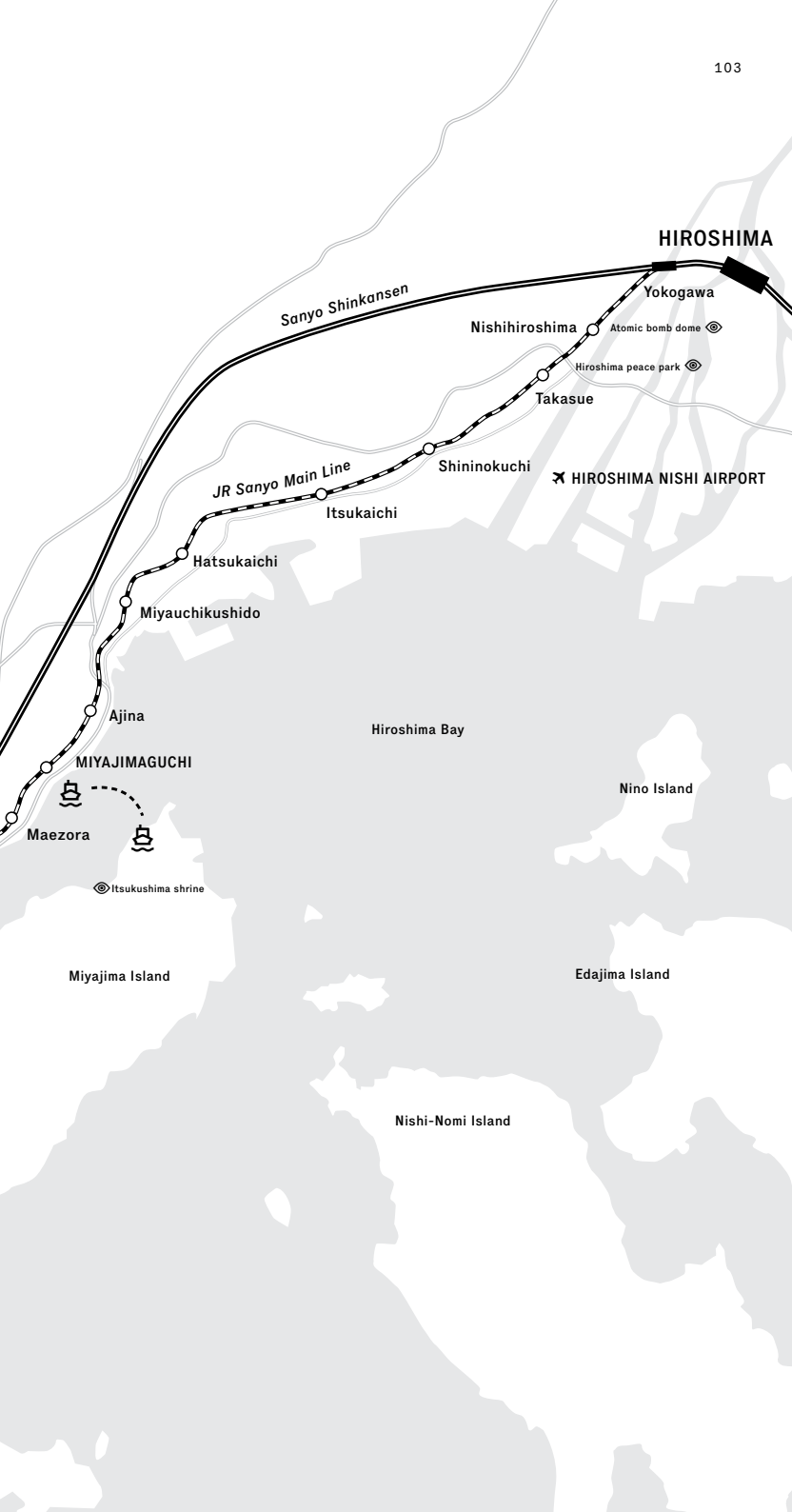
MOMIJISOU もみぢ荘 In the famous Momijidani Park, this peaceful quiet accommodation is surrounded by beautiful maple trees.
Momijidani-kouennai, Miyajima-cho, Hatsukaichi-shi, Hiroshima, 739-0500
08-2944-0077

WHERE TO EAT

KAKI-YA 牡蠣屋 Hiroshima prefecture's most famous delicacy, oysters, right next to Itsukushima Shrine! From the ferry terminal, turn right and walk along the coast, turning left to enter the shopping street. Kaki-ya is just past the post office.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
08-2944-2747
www.kaki-ya.jp

HOW TO GET THERE

Trains depart from Hiroshima Station every 15 minutes for the 26-minute ride to Miyajimaguchi (JR Sanyo line), from where it is a 2-minute walk to the ferry bound for Miyajima. You can ride on the JR Ferry for free with the Japan Rail Pass, it will take you 10 minutes to reach Miyajima.


HIROSHIMA
Sanyo Shinkansen
Yokogawa
Nishihiroshima
Atomic bomb dome
Hiroshima peace park
Takasue
Shininokuchi
HIROSHIMA NISHI AIRPORT
JR Sanyo Main Line
Itsukaichi
Hatsukaichi
Miyauchikushido
Ajina
Hiroshima Bay
MIYAJIMAGUCHI
Nino Island
Maezora
Itsukushima shrine
Miyajima Island
Edajima Island
Nishi-Nomi Island

24 From Masuda to Matsue

163 km total, **128 min** fastest journey, **4** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:49** → (A) **07:47** | Last Train (D) **19:31** → (A) **22:35**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:13** → (A) **08:37** | Last Train (D) **19:16** → (A) **21:22**

Masuda is an important railway junction as it is at the end of the line from Shin-Yamaguchi and is the connecting station for the San'in Coast Lines. The Super Matsukaze LEX Aqua Liner and the and the Super Oki run on the San'in Line between Masuda and Matsue. Of the three Super Oki, two continue to Yonago and the third Super Oki per day, as well as the Super Matsukaze, continue to Tottori (see p.106). To enjoy the coastal views at the beginning of the journey, sit on the left.

0 km

MASUDA

51 km

HASHI This station is just a short walk from Aquas, a modern aquarium just opposite the beach, where you can see a variety of sea life including white Beluga whales.

60 km

GOTSU You can change here to catch a local train if you wish to visit Maji or Nima (not all the rapid services stop at Maji).

77 km

YUNOTSU A spa town, popular with older travelers, believed to have been established 1 300 years ago. Not all limited express trains stop here.

83 km

MAJI Alight here to visit the 'singing sand' of Kotogahama Beach.

86 km

NIMA Home to the Nima Sand Museum. As the train approaches the station you will see the museum's glass pyramid building on the left. One of the main attractions is the giant hourglass, which takes one year to empty from the upper to the lower globe.

97 km

ODA-SHI Along with Nima this is an access point for a bus trip to Iwami Ginzan, a former silver mine.

130 km

IZUMO-SHI This is the nearest JR station to the Izumo Taisha Shrine, the oldest Shinto shrine in Japan. From here the shrine can be accessed by private Ichibata railway. Walk to Dentetsu Izumo-shi Station. Take a local train to Kawato. Change here for another train to Izumo-Taisha-mae. Total journey time is around 25 minutes.

146 km

SHINJI Is located just on the edge of Lake Shinji.

156 km

TAMATSUKURI-ONSEN An ancient and renowned hot spring is located here on the shore of Lake Shinji.

163 km

MATSUE

Matsue

WHAT TO SEE

MATSUE CASTLE The original castle was completed in 1611 and was partly reconstructed in 1642 and again in the 1950s. There is an impressive view of Matsue and Lake Shinji from the top floor.
Open daily, 8:30 .am. to 5 p.m. Oct-Mar, to 6.30 p.m. Apr-Sep, ¥560, 50% off for overseas visitors.

LAFCADIO HEARN MEMORIAL MUSEUM A good collection of the author's manuscripts and objects from his stay in Japan. The museum is next to Lafcadio Hearn's Former Residence.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct-Mar, to 6:30 p.m. Apr-Sep, ¥300, 50% off for overseas visitors.

WHERE TO STAY

MATSUE NEW URBAN HOTEL 松江ニューアーバンホテル
A 10-minute taxi ride from JR Matsue Station is the New Urban Hotel. With a great view of Lake Shinji you can enjoy your hot spring bath overlooking the lake. Located a walkable distance from Matsue Castle and Samurai houses.
40-1 Nishicha-machi, Matsue-shi, Shimane, 690-0845
08-5223-0003
new.matsue-urban.co.jp/en

MINAMIKAN 皆美観 One of the most historical and traditional Japanese inns in Matsue. Enjoy a beautiful view of Lake Shinji and the Japanese garden. From JR Matsue Station, take a bus for Matsue Shinjiko Onsen bus stop. From there it is a 2-minute walk. A taxi will take about 10-15 minutes.
14 Suetsugu-Honmachi, Matsue-shi, Shimane, 690-0843
08-5221-5131
http://www.minami-g.co.jp/minamikan/18_english.php

WHERE TO EAT

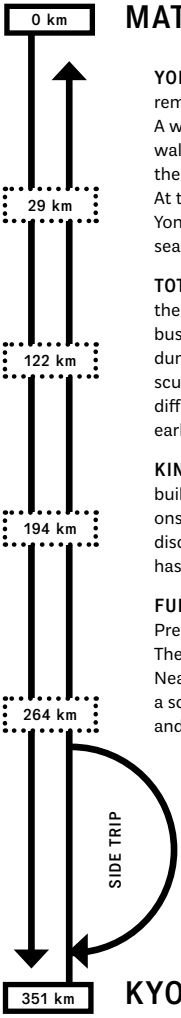
ISSHIKIAN 一色庵 Taste Izumo Soba, the local noodles of Matsue, at this authentic soba lunch shop. Try out the three-tiered wariko soba, topped with green onions, seaweed, and strong soup! From the east side of Matsue Castle, head south; at the first traffic light turn right.
Open for lunch until 4 p.m., closed Tuesdays.
08-5231-7180

AKISHIMA 明島 At this local izakaya, you can sample the fresh seafood from the north coast of Japan prepared in a variety of ways. Extremely close to Matsue Station. From the north exit of the station, continue straight on, past the main road and take the next left. Continue over the intersection and it will be on the left.
Open from 11.30 a.m. to 13.30 p.m. from Tuesday to Friday - 5.30 p.m.to 11 p.m.
Satuday and Sunday, closed Mondays.
08-5228-2239
matsue.mypl.net/shop/00000032252

25 From Matsue to Kyoto

351 km total, **154 min** fastest journey
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:19** → (A) **11:47** | Last Train (D) **16:45** → (A) **21:37**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **07:06** → (A) **12:29** | Last Train (D) **16:56** → (A) **22:41**

This itinerary follows the JR San'in Mainline. It is not for those in a hurry as the route is quite long and some connections are necessary. For a quicker route to Kyoto, take a bullet train in Okayama or Himeji depending on your starting point.



MATSUE

YONAGO This was a castle town during the Edo Period. Many remnants of its long history can be found throughout the city. A walk along the Kamo River will take you past traditional white-walled warehouses and nagayamon gates. As you walk through the city, there are hot spring footbaths to enjoy.
At the Kaike-Onsen hot spring, located about 15 minutes from Yonago Station, you can soak in the soothing waters from the sea.

TOTTORI The town is known for its sand dunes, the largest in the country, extending along the coast for 16 km. You can take a bus from the station to the sand dunes (N° 4 or 20). Next to the dunes is the popular Tottori Sand Museum, which features sand sculptures created by international artists. The art works have a different theme each year, and are on display from mid-April to early January.

KINOSAKI ONSEN (see opposite page) This is a pleasant town, built along a willow-lined river and is one of the most popular onsen destinations of the Kansai Region. Hot springs were discovered here around the 8th century and since then the town has developed into a charmingly old-fashioned onsen town.

FUKUCHIYAMA This is the second oldest city in the Kyoto Prefecture. It is a castle town, dating from the late 1500s.
The castle now houses a museum.
Nearby is the Sandanike Park Recreation Area, which is home to a science museum and planetarium, as well as a beautiful lake and gardens. 10 min by Kyoto Koutsu Bus from the station.

AMANOHASHIDATE Just 35 minutes from Fukuchiyama by direct train is Amanohashidate, and it is well worth the detour! Listed as one of Japan's three most scenic views, Amanohashidate is a pine-covered sandbar spanning the mouth of Miyazu Bay. Viewed from the mountains at either end of the bay, it looks like a pathway between heaven and earth, which is the literal meaning of its name.

KYOTO

Kinosaki Onsen

WHAT TO SEE

SCENIC RIVERSIDE STREET Kinosaki is well known for its picturesque, tree-lined river that runs through one part of the town. Unlike ryokan in the rest of Japan, in Kinosaki your ryokan will lend you a colorful cotton kimono to wear as you stroll through town.

ONSENJI TEMPLE Onsenji Temple was created to honor the founder of Kinosaki Onsen, hence the temple's name! You can take a ropeway up the mountain to see the temple, which also offers spectacular views of the town, its river and the Sea of Japan.

WHERE TO STAY

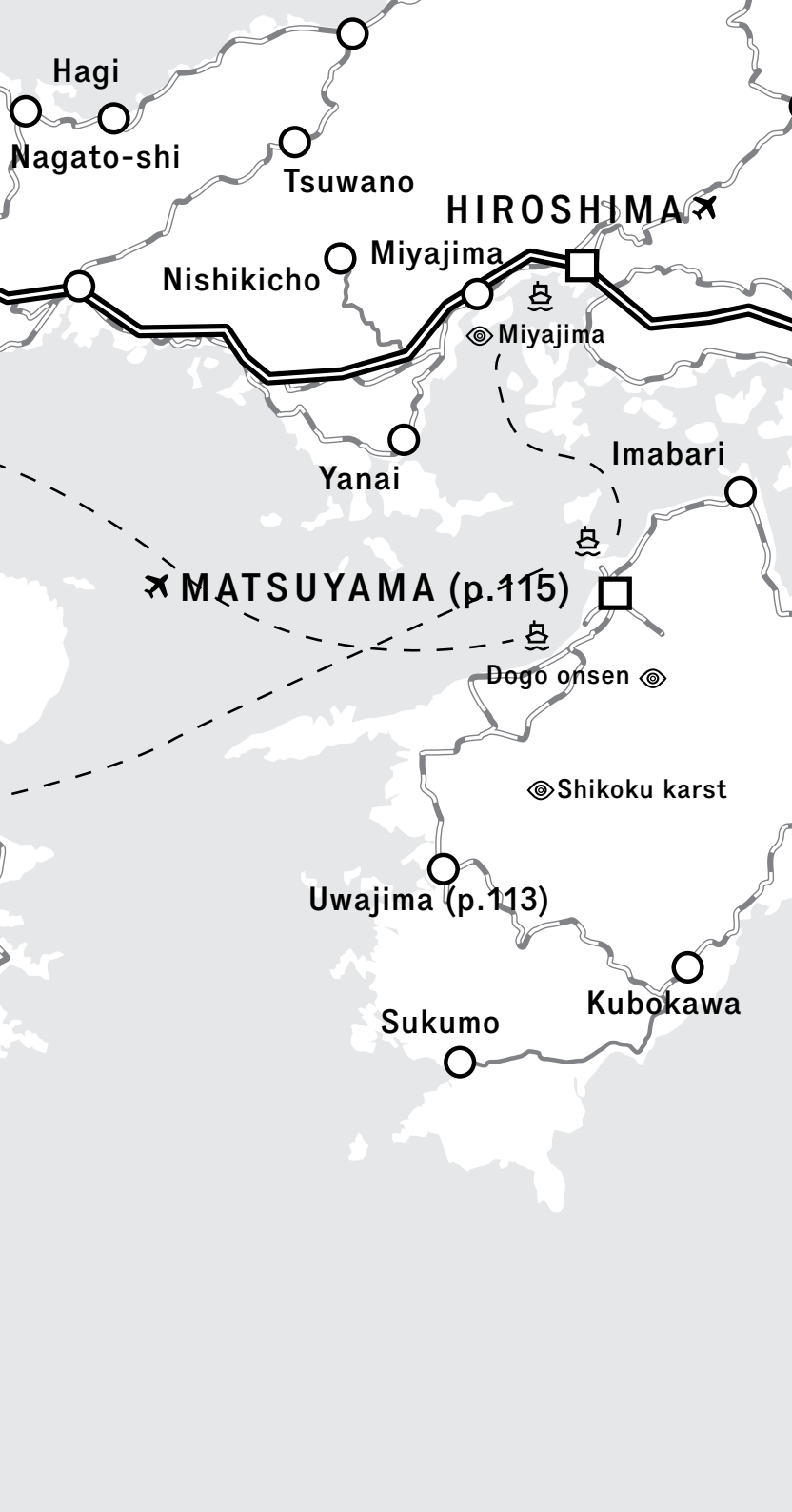
MIKIYA 三木屋 Built in the Edo period and recently renovated, this ryokan is a national cultural property. It offers traditional Japanese style rooms, a natural hot spring bath and free Wi-Fi in public areas, in a central location.
487 Yushima, Kinosaki-cho, Toyooka, Hyogo, 669-6101
07-9632-2031
www.kinosaki-mikiya.jp/sp

ASAGIRISO あさぎり荘 A simple and clean ryokan with helpful staff. Very close to the station, the scenic riverside street and the restaurant area.
876 Yushima, Kinosaki-cho, Toyooka, Hyogo, 669-6101
07-9632-2921
www.asagiriso.com

WHERE TO EAT

OKESHO おけしょう鮮魚の海中宛 Kinosaki Onsen is really close to the Sea of Japan; naturally, it's well-known for crab! Okesho offers crab in every form you can imagine — steamed, fried, raw, boiled...all of it delicious. From the station, head straight down the main road (route 9). The store is on the second floor of a building on the left corner, before the next intersection.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
07-9629-4832
http://www.okesyo.com/02kaichu/eng01.html

KIMAN 生萬 As you make your way down the street in your yukata, stop for a sweet treat at Kiman, which serves delicate puddings and crème brûlée made from local eggs boiled in the hot spring waters! Located on Kiyamachi Street just before the post office.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Closed Thursdays.
07-9632-2241
www.kiman.jp

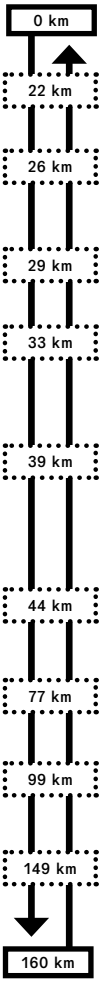

Hagi
Nagato-shi
Tsuwano
HIROSHIMA
Miyajima
Nishikicho
Miyajima
Yanai
Imabari
MATSUYAMA (p.115)
Dogo onsen
Shikoku karst
Uwajima (p.113)
Kubokawa
Sukumo

Shikoku
Miyoshi
Niimi
Tsuyama
Chizu
Kamigori
OKAYAMA
Kurashiki
Mihara
Fukuyama
Himeji
Tamano
Naoshima
The Inland Sea (p.118)
Shodoshima Island
Sakaide
TAKAMATSU(p. 99)
Kotohira
Awaji Island
Naruto
Awa-Ikeda
Iya valley
Tokushima
Oboke (p.111)
Kochi
Ryugado cave
Tosa Bay
Kaifu
Nahari

26 From Takamatsu to Kochi

160 km total, **133 min** fastest journey, **16** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:04** → (A) **08:18** | Last Train (D) **21:45** → (A) **00:06**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **04:51** → (A) **07:02** | Last Train (D) **21:20** → (A) **23:26**

From Takamatsu, located in central Kagawa Prefecture on the island of Shikoku, you can head south on the Dosan Line to Kochi.



TAKAMATSU

SAKAIDE See p.98

UTAZU As you leave the station you cannot miss Play Park Gold Tower. Inside are amusement arcades and many attractions aimed at younger children. For adults it is also possible to have a fish pedicure. You can take the elevator to the top of the tower for views of the Seto-Ohashi Bridge.

MARUGAME If you are traveling on an Isizushi LEX you will need to change here for Kochi.

TADOTSU The line divides here. The Dosan Line continues to Kochi and the Yosan Line goes west towards Matsuyama (See p.106).

ZENTSU-JI The Zentsu-ji temple is a 20-minute walk from the station. The temple is built at the birthplace of Kobo Daishi, who founded the Shingon sect of Buddhism.
In February, Zentsu-ji is also home to one of Japan's Hadaka Matsuri (Naked Festivals), in which participants are usually dressed in just a loincloth.

KOTOHIRA You can stop here to visit the Kotohira-gu (or Kompira-san) Shrine. There are 785 steps up to the main shrine, then a further 583 steps to the inner sanctuary. It is possible to leave luggage at Kotohira Station.

AWA-IKEDA This is the main interchange for the Tokushima Line. Try to reserve a window seat on either side of the train so as not to miss the great views from here down to Oboke.

OBOKE (see opposite page) Not all limited express trains stop here.

GOMEN Change here for a visit to Le Jardin de Monet Marmottan au Village de Kitagawa; a copy of Monet's garden in Giverny, France. Take the private Gomen-Nahari Line to the terminus, from where you can catch a shuttle bus to the garden.

KOCHI

A small city with a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Kochi has several attractions, including Kochi Castle, located downtown. It is one of twelve original Japanese castles remaining. There is a great view from the top of the main tower.

Oboke

WHAT TO SEE

OBOKE GORGE If you are content to gaze at the rapids from a distance, there are viewing platforms near the station. You can also take a sightseeing cruise. The departure point is about 1 km from the station (daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., may close earlier during the low season, ¥500). If you are feeling more adventurous, you can try white-water rafting or canyoning. Take a local train from Oboke to Tosa-Iwahara in just 7 minutes.
Happy Raft organizes half-day and one-day tours, (Mar-Oct, from ¥5000 pp).

WHERE TO STAY

OBOKEKYO MANNAKA 大歩危峡まんなか Obokekyo Mannaka is accessed by ropeway, up the side of the mountains surrounding the gorge, but this ryokan offers truly spectacular views for very reasonable prices.
Oboke, Yamashiro-cho, Miyoshi-shi, Tokushima, 779-5451
08-8384-1216
www.mannaka.co.jp

JAPANESE 'ECO-GUESTHOUSE' KU NEL ASOB 空音遊 This cute little guesthouse has a very homey feel, from its home-cooked vegetarian meals to its friendly owners, who will even pick you up from the station!
442 Nishiiyayamamura, Enoki, Miyo-shi, Tokushima, 778-0104
Information and reservation on the english website
www.k-n-a.com/eng.htm

HOTEL KAZURABASHI ホテル かずら橋 A 15 minute taxi ride from Oboke station. With nature views from its rooftop hot spring bath, this hotel offers Japanese style rooms and a dining room where food is prepared in the hearth at the guest's table.
33-1 Yamamurazentoku Nishiiya, Miyoshi 778-0102
08-8387-2171
www.kazurabashi.co.jp

WHERE TO EAT

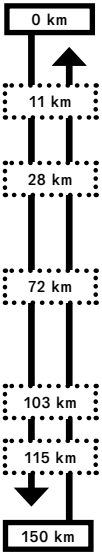
ALEX アレックス Classic, inexpensive soba with a beautiful view of the Oboke rapids. Located west of the station, up the main road.
Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
08-8384-1489
www.yamashiro-info.jp/lapis/cafe.htm

IYABIJIN 祖谷美人 Noodle and rice dishes, as well as the local specialty, barbecued fish on a stick. Outdoor seating.
Located south of the intersection of routes 45 (to the station) and 32.
Open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
08-8387-2009
http://iyabijin.jp/

27 From Kochi to Uwajima

155 km total, **212 min** fastest journey, **16** trains per day, 1-2 changes
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **08:20** → (A) **12:15** | Last Train (D) **16:49** → (A) **20:44**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:04** → (A) **10:59** | Last Train (D) **17:30** → (A) **21:15**

It is a slow but picturesque journey from Kochi to Uwajima. If you are in a hurry, a quicker JR bus service is available, which takes 2 ½ hours.



KOCHI

INO Known for the production of Japanese paper. You can visit the Ino Paper Museum. A tram also runs here from Kochi Station.

SAKAWA Tsukasabotan sake comes from here. You will see many rice fields on this rural stretch of the journey.

KUBOKAWA The JR Dosan Line ends here and the private Tosa Kuroshio Railways runs to Nakamura. The JR Nanpu LEX continues on this line to Nakamura. This part of the line is very rural and scenic. You should however change here for the Yodo Line, which runs along the Shimanto River and terminates in Uwajima.

TOKAWA Between July 22nd and August 31st a torroko, open-air carriage, is added between here and Ekawasaki.

EKAWASAKI From this point the train leaves the Shimanto-gawa and heads for the Pacific Ocean.

UWAJIMA

Uwajima

WHAT TO SEE

TAGA JINJA A Shinto fertility shrine and its infamous Sex Museum, Deko Boko Jindou. A surprising collection is housed in this three-storey building.
Open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥800 for the museum.

TOGYU The other attraction of Uwajima is bull fighting. Two bulls lock horns and push like sumo wrestlers for control of a ring.
Tournaments take place several times a year (Jan. 2nd, 1st Sun. in April, July 24th, Aug. 14th, and 4th Sun. in Oct., ¥2500).

WHERE TO STAY

KIYA RYOKAN 木屋旅館 This ryokan was first built in 1911, and it soon became famous for the Japanese literary figures who often came to visit. In 2012, the inside of the building was completely redone for a much more contemporary, modern feel while retaining the traditional ryokan aesthetics. A 15-minute walk from Uwajima Station.
2-8-2 Honmachioute, Uwajima-shi, Ehime, 798-0041
08-9522-0101
http://kiyaryokan.com/en/

UWAJIMA KOKUSAI HOTEL 宇和島国際ホテル This small-scale, low key hotel is only a 2-minute walk from Uwajima Station. They offer Japanese rooms with your choice of Western beds or Japanese futons.
4-1 Nishikimachi, Uwajima-shi, Ehime, 798-0034
08-9525-0111
uwajima-kokusaihotel.jp

WHERE TO EAT

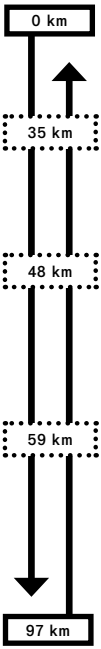
KADOYA かどや A popular restaurant serving a wide variety of local favorites such as jakoten, or fried fish, and tai meshi, or fresh fish on rice. Kadoya is directly south of Uwajima Station, on the corner of the intersection with the main road 320.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., except on Thursdays.
08-9522-1543
kadoya-taimeshi.com

KIKUYA 菊屋 This noodle restaurant has been open since 1877 and serves all kind of noodles. From Uwajima Castle walk east, past the post office, down the main road. Kikuya will be on your left.
Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Closed Thursdays.
08-9522-1145
kikuya-chanpon.com/chanpon.html

28 From Uwajima to Matsuyama

97 km total, **77 min** fastest journey, **26** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:34** → (A) **06:58** | Last Train (D) **21:16** → (A) **22:38**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:48** → (A) **07:13** | Last Train (D) **22:45** → (A) **00:05**

From Uwajima there are regular connections north to Matsuyama (Ehime) on the Yosan Line. This station is five minutes walk from JR Matsuyama Station where trains leave to Okayama (see page 116).



UWAJIIMA

YAWATAHAMA This is an important fishing community and has the largest fish market in Shikoku. It is also the nearest station to Cape Sada, which is the western-most point of Shikoku Island. From the lighthouse at the end of the cape, there are good views of the Seto Inland Sea. The best way to reach the cape is to hire a car.

IYO-OZU This is an old castle town on the Hiji River. In the summer season, it is possible to see traditional cormorant fishing. A boat trip takes visitors to see the diving birds (June to mid-Sept.).

UCHIKO Between the Edo and Meiji periods, Uchiko developed and thrived as a manufacturing center for Japanese paper and wax. Today, you can visit the Yokaichi Historical Area, a street of merchant houses, which have been preserved and some of which are open to the public as museums or coffee shops. Uchiko also has a traditional Kabuki theater, built in 1916 and restored in 1985.
You can visit the Kamihaga Residence and the Japanese Wax Museum. The Kamihaga family established the production of wax in Uchiko.

MATSUYAMA

Matsuyama

WHAT TO SEE

MATSUYAMA CASTLE The castle sits in the heart of the city, on top of a hill. Construction of the castle was completed in 1627. Like many other Japanese castles, it has suffered fire and destruction through the ages, but has been restored with original materials. To reach it you can take the ropeway (cable car) or the chair lift, or you can walk uphill through the castle gardens.
Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Castle ¥500, ropeway or chair lift ¥500 round-trip.

DOGO ONSEN It boasts a three-thousand-year history and is said to be the oldest hot spring in Japan. This onsen can accommodate 7 000 people in numerous hotels and ryokan. Visit Dogo Onsen Honkan, housed in a wooden building dating from 1894.
Cost for bathing only from ¥400, bathing yukata, crackers and tea ¥800 for 1 hour, smaller and private rooms to relax are also available at an additional cost.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL PATIO DOGO ホテルパティオ・ドウゴ A lovely hotel in the heart of Matsuyama City, across the street from Dogo Onsen.
20-12 Yuno-machi, Matsuyama-shi, Ehime, 790-0842
08-9941-4128
www.patio-dogo.co.jp/framepage2.htm

TOKYO DAIICHI HOTEL MATSUYAMA 東京第一ホテル松山
A highly rated hotel a short walk from the station and across the street from the Matsuyama Castle grounds. English speaking staff and lovely accommodation.
6-16 Minamihoribata-cho, Matsuyama-shi, Ehime, 790-0006
08-9947-4411
http://www-a.global.hankyu-hotel.com/matsuyama/

WHERE TO EAT

GOSHIKI 郷土料理 五志喜 Five-colored somen noodles, dyed naturally with ingredients like plums and green tea, are a specialty of Matsuyama. From Matsuyama Station, walk east on the main road, following it past the south end of Matsuyama Castle. Turn right at the third traffic light, then take the next left. Goshiki will be on your right.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
www.goshiki-soumen.co.jp

DOGO BEER-KAN 道後麦酒館 Dogo's very own microbrewery, located around the block from Dogo Onsen, also has its own restaurant with its beers on tap and simple Japanese fare.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
www.dogobeer.co.jp

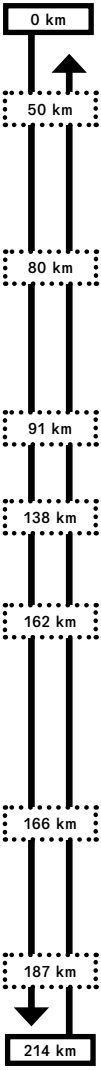
HOW TO GET AROUND

Matsuyama has a tram network that has 5 different lines. Line 1 and 2 operate in only one direction. Route 3, 5 and 6 all go to Dogo Onsen.

29 From Matsuyama to Okayama

214 km total, **159 min** fastest journey, **1** train per hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:05** → (A) **07:51** | Last Train (D) **18:40** → (A) **21:29**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **07:22** → (A) **10:05** | Last Train (D) **22:00** → (A) **00:56**

JR Matsuyama Station lies on the west edge of the town.
The Shiokaze LEX runs direct from here to Okayama.



MATSUYAMA

IMABARI From Imabari a road bridge connects Shikoku with Honshu. The city is home to a large cotton processing industry, and is particularly well-known for its towels.

IYO SAIJO Right outside the station is the Shikoku Railway Culture Museum. You can view past trains including the first generation shinkansen. The inventor is from Shikoku. The Asahi Brewery is also another great place to visit. There are shuttle buses that run from Iyo-Saijo Station to the brewery. The tour is free and you get a drink on the house afterwards. The town has various festivals in October, to thank the gods for the rice harvest. Of these festivals, the most notable is the shrine festival, which is held the second weekend of every October.

NIHAMA If you're lucky enough to be in the city from October 14th to 16th, you should not miss the spectacular annual Taiko (Japanese drum) Festival.

KAN-ONJI This is the best stop for Kotohiki Park, a nationally designated Place of Scenic Beauty. Kotohiki Park encompasses Zenigata, a huge and mysterious coin shape, carved in the sand.

TADOTSU This is the junction between the Yosan Line, from Matsuyama to Takamatsu and the Dosan Line to Kochi. Here a rapid uncoupling of the train takes places, allowing the front carriages (4-8) to continue to Okayama, whilst the others head for Takamatsu.

MARUGAME A city worth a stop-over. You will find the tourist information center just to the right as you leave the south exit (Mon-Fri, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Sat-Sun, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m). Also, just outside the station is the Marugame Genichiro Inokuma Museum of Contemporary Art (MIMOCA). The permanent exhibition includes work by Genichiro Inokuma, who attended school in Marugame, before settling in New York, then Hawaii. Visit Uchiwa no Minato Museum to see how Marugame's round paper fans are made. Marugame supplies 90% of the Japanese domestic fan market.

KOJIMA This is the first stop on Honshu after crossing the Seto-Ohashi Bridge.

OKAYAMA

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Kagoshima	Nara	Urawa
Kamakura	Niigata	Utsunomiya
Kawasaki	Obihiro	Uwajima
Kita-Kyushu	Okayama	Wakayama
Kitakami	Osaka	Yakushima
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Kumamoto	Sendai	Yokohama
Kyoto	Shizuoka	
Maihama	Takamatsu	

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The Inland Sea: Honshu to Shikoku by Boat

As Japan is made up of so many islands, it is naturally home to an extensive network of ferry routes.

Japan's four main islands, including Honshu and Shikoku, are connected with each other by bridges and tunnels, but ferries can be an interesting, if not particularly fast, alternative. Crossing the Inland Sea by boat, you will be able to admire the stunning scenery of its coast and its thousands of islands.

According to Japanese mythology, the islands of the Inland Sea are the oldest part of the country. In history, the area around the Inland Sea was the scene of all three great battles of the civil war of the 12th century, between the Heike and Genji clans. More recently, it was on an Inland Sea city, Hiroshima, that the first atomic bomb was dropped. In some places, the coast also bears witness to the extraordinary postwar growth of the Japanese economy, with its industrial complexes, notably the immense automobile works outside Hiroshima where Mazda cars are manufactured.

HONSHU TO SHIKOKU

Different crossing points are possible between Honshu and Shikoku, the most popular being from Hiroshima to Matsuyama. Two kinds of boat service are available: a high-speed boat, with 13 services per day and taking 1 hour (¥7100, a regular ferry, with 10 services per day, taking 3 hours (¥ 3600, for a car ¥ 12000). Setonaikai Kisen operates the services (http://setonaikaikisen.co.jp/language/en/carferry/). Jumbo Ferry offers a service (http://www.ferry.co.jp/pdf/jumbo-ferry-guide-book.pdf) from Kobe to Takamatsu with a frequency of 4 per day. The journey takes 5 hours (¥1940 passenger,¥4990 car). Nankai Ferry operates between Wakayama and Tokushima. There are 8 ferries per day and the crossing takes 2 hours (2nd class: ¥2000, 1st class: ¥2500, car ¥9500).

VISITING THE INLAND SEA AND ITS ISLANDS

In addition to the regular ferry services between Honshu, Shikoku and the various islands, SKK (Seto Naikai-kisen; 08-2253-1212; ticket office 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.) offers day cruises on the Inland Sea from Hiroshima. The cruises are seasonal (with lunch-dinner, from ¥5000-7500). It is also possible to visit some of the Islands of the Inland Sea.

From Miyajima-guchi, near to Hiroshima, boats leave for Miyajima (See p.102), the best-known island of the Inland Sea, where the great red torii stands in the water at the entrance to the Itsukushima shrine.

Another example is Shodo, which can be reached from Takamatsu, as well as Okayama and Uno. It is the second largest island. Most Japanese know one thing about Shodo: it is the only place in Japan where olives are grown. The island has some fine scenery, including a gorge inhabited by monkeys, but best of all are the beautiful views out to sea.

Naoshima Island is known for its many contemporary art museums. For example, the Chichu, which houses a number of installations by James Turrell, Walter De Maria, and paintings by Claude Monet. Another contemporary museum (and hotel) is Benesse House, designed by Tadao Ando. There is also the James Bond Museum, inspired by the island being used as one of the settings for the 2002 Bond novel The Man with the Red Tattoo by Raymond Benson. Boats leave for Naoshima from Uno Port.

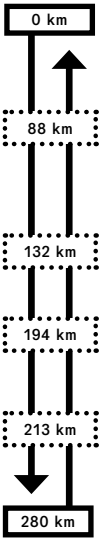
FUKUOKA-HAKATA (p.123)
Arita
Sasebo
Saga
Tosu
Yanagawa
NAGASAKI (p.125)
Isahaya
Shimabara
Unzen
KUMAMOTO (p.127)
Amakusa Islands
Misumi
Shin-Yatsushiro
Izumi
Hitoyoshi
Yunomae
Yoshimatsu
Kirishima
KAGOSHIMA (p.129)
Hayato
Sakurajima
Miyakonojo
Makurazaki
Kagoshima Bay
Miyazaki (p.133)
Shibushi
Aoshima
Ibusuki
Ibusuki
Nichinan
Yakushima
Tanegashima

Kyushu
Shin-Shimonoseki
Kokura
Shin-Yamaguchi
Nishikicho
Yanai
Nakasu
Yoake
Kurokawa
Yufuin
Beppu (p.131)
Oita
Aso
Usuki
Takachiho Gorge
Nobeoka

30 From Hiroshima to Fukuoka

280 km total, **67 min** fastest journey, **3** trains every hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:05** → (A) **07:33** | Last Train (D) **22:31** → (A) **23:51**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:00** → (A) **07:23** | Last Train (D) **21:50** →(A) **22:59**

As you travel towards Kyushu's largest city, Fukuoka, remember that the city is also called 'Hakata', and that this latter name is widely used in the transportation system. Indeed Fukuoka is the product of the fusion of two cities, the port city of Hakata and the former castle town of Fukuoka. Hakata remains the name of one of Fukuoka's central districts and of the main railway station. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Nozomi or the Mizuho).



HIROSHIMA

TOKUYAMA A few Hikari shinkansen stop here. The most popular festival is the Christmas Tree Festival, where the city fills the trees along Miyuki-dori with Christmas lights and plays Christmas carols from 6-10 p.m. each night. On December 23rd-25th, food stalls fill the sidewalks, offering grilled meats, beer, cotton candy, candied fruit, and small-scale carnival games.

SHIN-YAMAGUCHI An important point of connection for western Honshu.

SHIN-SHIMONOSEKI A city famous for its 'fugu' (blow fish), the notorious fish that can kill when eaten if not correctly prepared. 70% of Japan's fugu is traded at the fish market in Shimonoseki.

KOKURA First stop in Kyushu. JR West runs the shinkansen tracks at Kokura, so if you're changing from the shinkansen, follow the sign for 'JR Kyushu Lines'.

HAKATA (FUKUOKA)

Fukuoka

WHAT TO SEE

TOCHOJI TEMPLE About an 8-minute walk north-west of Hakata Station and located to the right of Taihaku-dori is Tochoji Temple. Up on the second floor is Japan's largest seated, wooden Buddha, measuring 10 m (33 ft.). Particularly interesting is the trip through the Hell of Buddhism, a room filled with colored reliefs of unfortunate souls burning in Hell. Enter the dark, twisting passageway and walk through it guided by a handrail, which will lead you back to the light at the end of your visit.
Open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m, free.

SHOFUKUJI TEMPLE Founded in 1195 by Eizai, who introduced Zen to Japan through the Rinzai sect, this massive yet sober wooden temple can only be seen from the outside, but is well worth the visit.
Open daily and all day, free.

YATAI While in Fukuoka one cannot miss the typical Yatai, or food stalls, that give the city its lively atmosphere in the evening. The best location to enjoy **various food delicacies** is along the river on Nakasu Island.

DISCOVER MIYAJIMA WITH OUR ACTIVITIES
https://www.japan-experience.com/activities-in-fukuoka

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL ACTIVE HAKATA ホテルアクティブ博多 Great access, only a 4-minute walk from Hakata Station, downtown area of Fukuoka. Walking distance from the city's main shopping area and food district.
3-20-16 Hakataekimae, Hakata-ku, Fukuoka, 812-0011
09-2452-0001
www.hotel-active.com/hakata

Discover the real Japan with our house rentals in Fukuoka on page 95.

WHERE TO EAT

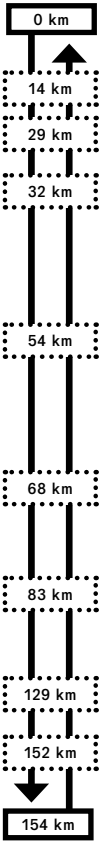
IPPUDO 一風堂 Fukuoka's most popular food export, Hakata ramen, at its finest. Visit the original branch of Ippudo next to the Tokyu Hands department store inside Hakata Station to taste the rich flavors of the Hakata 'tonkotsu' broth.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to midnight.
09-2413-5088
www.ippudo.com

HAKATA HANAMIDORI 博多華味鳥 天神店 Mizutaki, or chicken hot pot, is another famous dish from Fukuoka. From Tenjin Subway Station, walk south to the main Kokutai Road and turn left. Hanamidori is on the left after two traffic lights.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. on weekends, 5 p.m. 10 p.m.
09-2738-5583
https://www.hanamidori.net/store/archives/10

31 From Fukuoka to Nagasaki

154 km total, **108 min** fastest journey, **25** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:55** → (A) **08:01** | Last Train (D) **21:52** → (A) **23:42**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:58** → (A) **07:58** | Last Train (D) **21:31** → (A) **23:21**

This route is served by the Limited Express Kamome trains. Be sure to reserve a seat on the left-hand side of the train as you travel from Fukuoka to Nagasaki for great views of the Ariake Sea.



HAKATA (FUKUOKA)

FUTSUKAICHI A small onsen town.

TOSU The highlight here seems to be the Tosu Premium Outlet with over 100 stores.

SHIN-TOSU A second station newly built in Tosu as an interchange between this line and the Kyushu Shinkansen.

SAGA Visit the Saga City Historical and Ethnological Museum with houses from the Edo, Meiji and Taisho periods. If you have a few hours to spare around Saga Station, you can visit Horie Shrine, just to the north-west and dating back to the 13th century. You can rent a bicycle and follow the old JR Saga Line past some old stations and visit the most famous sight in Saga, the Chikugo River Lift Bridge. Those visiting in October may be lucky enough to catch the Saga Balloon Festival, a week-long event and one of the largest in the world.

HIZENYAMAGUCHI Change here for trains to Arita, famous for Imari porcelain and the port of Sasebo.

HIZENKASHIMA You can start to see the beautiful Ariake Sea on the left side of the train. Once a year, Kashima holds the Kashima Gatalympics, an event made purely to try and put the city on the map. Teams from all over the world compete in Olympic-style games, but in thick mud leading to interesting consequences.

ISAHAYA If you are heading to Unzen Onsen, you will need to change to a non-JR line here.

URAKAMI The nearest station to the Atomic Bomb Museum and Peace Park.

NAGASAKI

Nagasaki

WHAT TO SEE

GLOVER GARDEN An open air museum, the garden of the first western house built in Japan, that of a Scottish merchant, Thomas Glover, who was instrumental in the development of Kirin beer.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥610.

NAGASAKI PEACE PARK The park, the Atomic Bomb Museum and Hypocenter Park is a sobering place to reflect on the events of 1945 and the huge loss of life suffered by the city.
Open daily except December 29 to 31, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥200.

GUNKANJIMA About 20 km off the coast of Nagasaki is Gunkanjima 'Battleship Island', made famous in the James Bond film Skyfall as the inspiration for the baddies lair. A recently added boat dock allows you to land and get a little closer to what was at one time the most densely populated place on earth.
3 hours boat tours, around ¥4000. Reservations recommended on weekend and during holidays.

WHERE TO STAY

S-PERIA HOTEL NAGASAKI エスペリアホテル長崎 500 meters from JR Nagasaki train station, this hotel provides modern rooms with free Wi-Fi. Convenient and modern.
5-35 Gotomachi, Nagasaki 850-0036
09-5826-1211
www.s-peria.com/nagasaki/en/

DORMY INN NAGASAKI ドーミーイン長崎 Located right in front of Chinatown, from Nagasaki Station take the tram for 6 minutes to Tsukimachi. From there the hotel is a minute on foot. Enjoy the hotels complimentary public bath.
7-24 Doza-machi, Nagasaki, 850-0841
09-5820-5489
www.hotespa.net/hotels/nagasaki

WHERE TO EAT

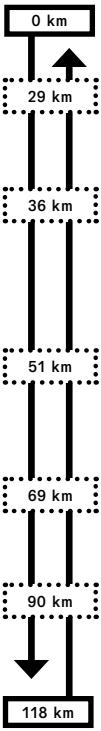
KOUZANROU 江山楼 中華街本店 Nagasaki has the first Chinatown in Japan with roots in the 17th century, this is the best place in the south to get noodles. Enter Chinatown from the Tsukimachi street car station, then take the first left and continue to the end of the street. There is also a shop at the 1F in Nagasaki Station
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., 5 p.m. to 8:15 p.m.
09-5824-5000
www.kouzanrou.com

HAKUSUIDO 白水堂 Nagasaki's most famous confection, castella, in all shapes and sizes. Hakusuido is located on the street directly perpendicular to Shianbashi street car station.
Open daily, 9:30 a.m. to 7.30 p.m.
09-5826-0145
www.momokasutera.com

32 From Fukuoka to Kumamoto

118 km total, **37 min** fastest journey by SAKURA, **66** trains per day
< OUTWARD JOURNEY BY SAKURA OR TSUBAME >
First Train (D) **06:10** → (A) **07:00** | Last Train (D) **23:10** → (A) **23:59**
< RETURN > First Train (D) **06:01** → (A) **06:50** | Last Train (D) **23:17** →(A) **23:55**

The fastest Mizuho trains run non-stop between these two stations, but you are not able to use these with the JR Pass. Sakura shinkansens are also a goop options as most trains don't stop between Kurume and Kumamoto.



HAKATA (FUKUOKA)

SHIN-TOSU A second station newly built in Tosu as an interchange between this line and the Kyushu Shinkansen.

KURUME For travel to Yufuin, a beautiful hot spring town, change here for trains towards Oita. In Kurume you can find the Ishibashi Cultural Centre and Museum of Art, established by the founder of the Bridgestone Company. Also visit and climb up inside the 62 m tall Buddha cradling a 13 m baby, at Naritasan Temple.

CHIKUGO-FUNAGOYA Another town with a lot of onsen on offer, feel free to get off and have a wander around and jump in a hot bath. Head east from here to the hills outside Yame town to discover some of the largest tea gardens in Japan as well as numerous burial mounds dating back to the 4th-7th centuries, dotted around the area.

SHIN-OMUTA A town that prospered during the coal boom, hosting one of the biggest coal mines in Japan, Miike Mine, until its closure in 1997.

SHIN-TAMANA As with many bullet train stations, this is a few miles out of town so you would need to take a bus or taxi to visit the onsen in Tamana. See also Renge-in Tanjo-ji, a Buddhist temple with one of the largest Peace Bells in the world and a beautiful, modern 5-story pagoda nearby.

KUMAMOTO

Kumamoto

WHAT TO SEE

KUMAMOTO CASTLE This is the highlight of the town and consists of a lot of different buildings spread out over a large area. Unfortunately the original building was burnt in battle at the end of the 19th century and this is a modern replica. There are great walls and moats that give you a sense of the time and energy it took to build this castle and even an underground passage to nearby buildings.
Due to april 2016 earthquake, the castle may be closed to the public for a long time.

FORMER HOSOKAWA RESIDENCE If you want to know what it was like to be a high-ranking samurai and live in luxury, make a visit to this villa, which has been restored to the height of its glory and is located in the large Kumamoto Castle Park.
Open daily except December 29 to 31, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥300.

SUIZENJI-KOEN A garden built to recreate the 53 stops on the old Tokaido post route from Edo (Tokyo) to Kyoto, in miniature. There is a very good representation of Mt. Fuji, though you may not get near it due to the tour groups having the obligatory photo taken there.
Open daily, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., ¥400.

WHERE TO STAY

HIGOJI GUEST HOUSE 民宿 肥後路 The guest house is very basic and simple. Its charm is truly the owner, who will pick you up at Kumamoto Station and give you useful information and help you plan out how to spend your day in Kumamoto.
4-39-31 Kasuga, Kumamoto, 860-0047
09-6352-7860

NIKKO HOTEL KUMAMOTO ホテル日航熊本 A luxury hotel located in the centre of the city, within a walkable distance from Kumamoto Castle. 15 minutes by tram from JR Kumamoto Station.
2-1 Kamitori-cho, Chuo-ku, Kumamoto, 860-8536
09-6211-1111
https://www.okura-nikko.com/japan/kumamoto/hotel-nikko-kumamoto/

WHERE TO EAT

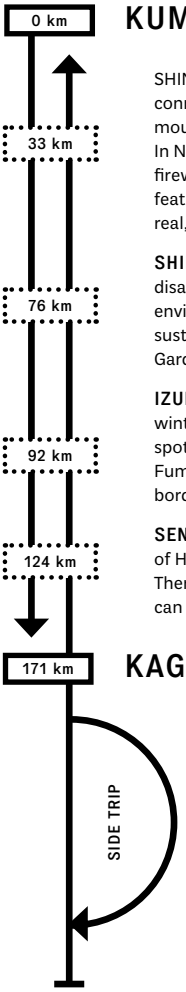
RED LAN TEI This popular restaurant is just outside of Kumamoto Castle. They serve a local Kumamoto, Chinese-inspired dish called Taipien. From the Kumamotojo street car station, go east (opposite Kumamoto Castle), take the second right, and turn left.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
09-6352-3812
www.kourantei.com

TOFU KISSHO とうふ吉祥 An inexpensive, but plentiful set lunch of tofu prepared in many different ways, on your way to or from Kurokawa Onsen. Located east of the Kurokawa Onsen bus stop, just before the post office, on the opposite side of the road.
Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed Fridays.
09-6744-0659

33 From Kumamoto to Kagoshima

171 km total, **1h01 min** fastest journey by TSUBAME, **38** trains per day with one change
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:12** → (A) **07:09** | Last Train (D) **23:00** → (A) **23:57**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:08** → (A) **07:05** | Last Train (D) **23:00** → (A) **23:56**

Since the opening of the Kyushu Shinkansen, the beauty of the old railway line, which runs closer to the coast, has been sacrificed for speed, hence there are a lot of tunnels, so be sure to have something to entertain yourself between the brief glimpses of nature. (Please note that JRP holders cannot take the Mizuho). The shinkansen stops at Kagoshima Chuo station where there are connections with the JR Lines, the Line 2 of the local tramway and the Machi Meguri Bus.



KUMAMOTO

SHINYATSUSHIRO An industrial port town with some ferry connections heading out west. Climb the 777 steps up the mountainside for a stunning view over the city and the coast. In November there are two big attractions: one of the largest firework festivals in Western Japan and the Myoken Sai Festival, featuring a procession of horses, lions, turtles and snakes (some real, some shrines!)

SHIN-MINAMATA The scene of a terrible mercury poisoning disaster in the 1950s, Minamata is now leading the drive to be an environmental model city and is at the forefront of recycling and sustainability efforts. Take a taxi out to the coast to visit Bamboo Garden with over 100 types of Bamboo.

IZUMI Famous for the Siberian Cranes that descend here in the winter months, Izumi is a paradise for twitchers. You can also spot a large number of authentic Samurai residences, in the Fumotocho area of the city, leftover from when Izumi was a border crossing point between two feudal domains.

SENDAI Not to be confused with the Sendai in the north- east of Honshu, this station is now within the city of Satsumasendai. There are hot springs, temples and even a planetarium that you can visit in the area.

KAGOSHIMA-CHUO

YAKUSHIMA Yakushima Island is currently best-known as the model of the forests in the Studio Ghibli movie Princess Mononoke. The island, a few hours off the coast of Kyushu, is a natural wonderland, with World Heritage preservations and trees that are thousands of years old. Jomonsugi started growing in the Jomon Period and is said to be anywhere from 2000 to 7200 years old. From Kagoshima Port, take the high-speed ferry (2-3 hours, ¥7700) or car ferry (4 hours, ¥4600), which go to either of Yakushima's two ports, Miyanoura and Ando. Flight also go to Yakushima once daily from Kagoshima, Fukuoka, and Osaka Airports.

Kagoshima

WHAT TO SEE

SAKURAJIMA You can't really help but see this magnificent sight if you visit Kagoshima. The cone of the active volcano, Sakurajima, is no longer an island, as a lava flow around 100 years ago connected it with the mainland. The volcano puffs away most days and sometimes you can see a layer of ash in town, if the wind is in the right (or wrong) direction. To get a closer look, take a ferry over and walk around the Nagisa Lava Trail and even have a foot bath.
15 minutes by ferry from Kagoshima, ¥160 one way.

SENGANEN GARDEN (OR ISOTEIEN) A great place from which to view Sakurajima, with a beautiful garden in the foreground. Constructed in the mid-17th century, this house and garden belonged to the highly influential Shimazu family, rulers of the region for over 700 years. Some of the earliest-blooming cherry blossoms in Japan can be seen here, from as early as late January.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., ¥1000.

IBUSUKI If you have the chance, carry on south to Ibusuki where you can partake in a sand bath and rid yourself of all impurities in a mere ten minutes!

WHERE TO STAY

JR KYUSHU HOTEL KAGOSHIMA JR九州ホテル鹿児島
The hotel has a convenient access to Kagoshima Chuo Station. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders
1-1-2, Take, Kagoshima-shi, Kagoshima, 890-0045
09-9213-8000
http://www.jrk-hotels.co.jp/en/Kagoshima/

NAKAZONO RYOKAN 中薗旅館 7 minutes on foot from JR Kagoshima Station. A 10-minute walk from Tenmonkan-dori, a famous shopping street.
1-18 Yasui-cho, Kagoshima, 892-0815
09-9226-5125
nakazonoryokan.wix.com/nakazonoryokan

WHERE TO EAT

JU'AN 寿庵 Ju'an serves Kagoshima's most famous delicacy, kurobuta pork, shabu shabu style. Located directly across from Kagoshima Chuo Station, exit 1.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
099-258-0555

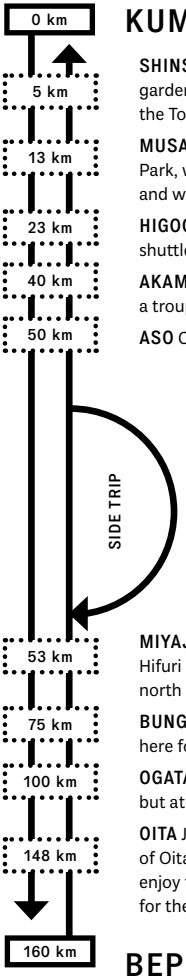
TENMONKAN MUJAKI 天文館むじゃき This is the original store to serve shirokuma, a shaved ice treat topped with fresh fruit and a milk and honey sauce, which is now popular all over Japan. From the Tenmonkan-dori street car stop, head straight south east, towards Tenmonkan Park. Mujaki will be on the right just before the park.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.
09-9222-6904
www.mujyaki.co.jp

34 From Kumamoto to Beppu

160 km total, **171 min** fastest journey, **4** trains per day (25 trains per day via Kokura)
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:01** → (A) **09:22** | Last Train (D) **19:26** → (A) **22:05**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **07:50** → (A) **11:09** | Last Train (D) **18:30** → (A) **21:34**

To travel between the two places at speed, take the bullet train up to Kokura and then a Sonic Limited Express down the east coast. An other train trains cross the center of mountainous Kyushu, passing through the caldera of Mt. Aso. Some trains continue to the coastal hot spring resort of Beppu.

Due the Kyushu earthquake in april 2016, part of the route Kumamoto-Aso has been suspended temporarily. Please check JR Kyushu's website for up to date informations. The train Aso Boy ! or Kyushu Odan Tokkyu runs once a day.



KUMAMOTO

SHINSUIZENJI A 10-minute walk from the station is Suizenji Koen, a garden built in the 17th century, which reproduces the 53 post towns of the Tokaido route between Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto.

MUSASHIZUKA A 20-minute walk south of the station is Musashi Park, where the grave of Miyamoto Musashi, a famous swordsman and writer of the Book of Five Rings, is located.

HIGOOZU The nearest station to Kumamoto Airport, with a free shuttle bus between here and the airport.

AKAMIZU 10 minutes by taxi away is the Sarumawashi Theater, where a troupe of monkeys perform in an art dating back over 1 300 years.

ASO Change here for a side trip to Mt. Aso.

MT. ASO is one of the most impressive volcanoes in Japan and the caldera has a circumference of over 100 km. Within it there are five active volcanic peaks. As these are active, there are sometimes closures due to build-up of volcanic gas. We would advise people with breathing diffiiculties to pass on this. The most accessible of the five peaks is Mt. Nakadake, which is accessed by a 40-minute bus ride from Aso Station and then either a ropeway or a 30-minute walk. On reaching the top you can look into the crater and see the volcanic energy at work and you may even recognise some views from the James Bond film 'You Only Live Twice'.

MIYAJI Once a year, tourists and locals gather at Aso Shrine for the Hifuri Shinji Fire Swinging Ritual. The shrine is a twenty-minute walk north of the station.

BUNGOOGI The beef of the Bungo Region rivals any in Japan. Do stop here for lunch if you have a chance.

OGATA(OITA) Nearby Harajiri Falls is nicknamed the Oriental Niagara, but at only twenty meters high, they are a bit smaller.

OITA Japanese come from all over the country to the hot spring city of Oita, a busy port on the inland sea, facing the island of Shikoku, to enjoy the famous fugu (puffer fish). Change here to the JR Kyudai Line for the small hot spring resort town of Yufuin.

BEPPU

Beppu

WHAT TO SEE

ONSEN Beppu is the second most volcanic area in the world, after Yellowstone, with over 3 000 onsen (hot springs) peppering the city with their pearly plumes of steam. For a traditional dip try Hyotan Onsen with its 'bury yourself' sand bath and waterfall massage shower or, for a more modern but nonetheless Japanese soak, try Suginoi palace, where you can bathe with a panoramic view of Beppu. If you are not going to be traveling down to Kagoshima, here is the place to have a hot sand bath on the beach.

HELLS After a thorough soaking, make your way to one or two of the ominously named 'hells'; eight spectacular hot springs for viewing rather than bathing. There is no need to see all of them but don't miss the vivid blue Umi Jigoku (Sea Hell) surrounded by a beautiful garden and free onsen foot bath.

WHERE TO STAY

SUGINOI HOTEL 杉乃井ホテル Sprawling ryokan resort nestled in the western hills of Beppu. Rooms of all sizes and prices, as well as a giant onsen with views of the whole city and the ocean.
1 Kankaiji, Beppu, Oita, 874-0822
09 7724 1141
www.suginoi-hotel.com/english/

BEPPU GUEST HOUSE 別府ゲストハウス An inexpensive and homey hostel with private rooms and dorms, very close to both the station and hot springs.
1-12 Ekimae-cho, Beppu, Oita, 874-0935
080-4642-9044
beppu-e.cloud-line.com

WHERE TO EAT

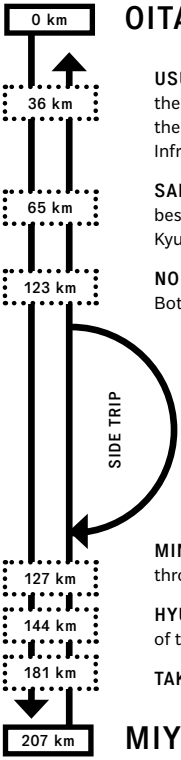
GRILL MITSUBA グリルみつば Serving one of Beppu's well-known dishes, toriten (chicken tempura), a small grill that dates back 60 years. From the east exit of Beppu Station, walk down the main Ekimae Road, take the third right, then the second left onto Shingu Street. The restaurant is on the left.
Open 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.
09-7723-2887

CHIKUDEN 別府北浜季節料理ちくでん Delicious mackerel sushi that changes depending on the local fish in season. From the east exit of Beppu Station, walk down the main Ekimae Road, take the fourth right, then the second left onto Shingu Street.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.
09-7725-2277
www.chikuden.com

35 From Oita to Miyazaki

207 km total, **179 min** fastest journey, **13** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **07:00** → (A) **10:15** | Last Train (D) **20:18** → (A) **23:33**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:56** → (A) **09:09** | Last Train (D) **17:31** → (A) **20:53**

Running down the east coast of Kyushu the journey is a contrast of mountain and sea as you pass the lush interior of the island on one side and the sea on the other, sometimes just meters away. One train a day comes all the way from Hakata (Fukuoka) down to Miyazaki, taking over five and a half hours to make the journey of just over 400 km.



OITA

USUKI A very pleasant coastal town with free bike rentals in the station to explore the local coast. 5 km south of Usuki are the Usuki Stone Buddhas, which were carved in the 12th century. Infrequent buses take about 20 minutes to get here.

SAIKI Make sure you are sitting on the left-hand side to get the best views of the coast. If you are after some of the best pizza in Kyushu, alight here and head for Pizza Savoy.

NOBEOKA A town mentioned by Natsumi Soseki in his book Botchan. Alight here for a side trip to Takachiho.

TAKACHIHO GORGE Until 2005 a private railway would take you from Noboeka to Takachiho Gorge, but after a typhoon in 2005, the line stopped operating. Now, only a bus will take you to this marvelous site, in less than two hours. The gorge was formed from the lava of Mt. Aso being slowly eroded by the Gokase-gawa River. The beautiful gorge, which resulted has aquamarine water surrounded by volcanic basalt columns.

MINAMINOBEOKA The southern station of Nobeoka passing through a very industrial district.

HYUGASHI A mecca for local surfers and close to the birthplace of the poet Wakayama Bokusui.

TAKANABE Here the line hugs the coast over a long distance.

MIYAZAKI

Miyazaki

WHAT TO SEE

AOSHIMA Aoshima is a small, beautiful island 30 minutes away from Miyazaki. With a circumference of around 1.5 kilometers, the island is surrounded by strange large rock formations called Oni no Sentakuita, the 'Devil's Washboard'. At the center of the island is Aoshima Jinja, a colorful shrine set back in the jungle that is said to bring luck to married couples.
Take the JR Nichinan Line from Miyazaki Station to Aoshima Station. The island is about a 5-minute walk from the station.

WHERE TO STAY

RICHMOND HOTEL MIYAZAKI EKI-MAE リッチモンドホテル宮崎駅前 Right outside of the east exit of Miyazaki Station. Highly rated, with many amenities and great prices.
2-2-3 Miyazaki-eki-higashi, Miyazaki, 880-0879
09-8560-0055
http://miyazaki.richmondhotel.jp/

JIZOAN 地蔵庵 For a beachside hot spring ryokan stay, you may have to travel a little outside Miyazaki City, but the 25-minute JR ride to Kodomo no Kuni Station is well worth it. Each traditional Japanese room is elegant and unique, and a 5-minute walk from the beach!
1-6-4 Aoshima, Miyazaki, 889-2162
09-8565-0039
www.jizoan.jp

WHERE TO EAT

KAMAAGE UDON TOGAKUSHI HONTEN 戸隠うどん本店
Taste very thin udon served with a special sauce. From Miyazaki Station's west exit, go straight on the main road. Turn left onto Route 220. Take the first right and then the fourth left. The restaurant will be on your right after 300 m.
Open daily, 6 p.m. to 2 a.m.
09-8524-6864

OGURA おぐら The original, and still the best, spot for Chicken Nanban, Miyazaki's well-known dish. A favorite with children and comes in huge portions. From Miyazaki Station's west exit, go straight down the main road and turn left onto Route 220. Take the first left down a very narrow side street, and Ogura is at the end of the street just before it veers right.
Open 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesdays.
09-8522-2296

Gosho
Shirakami Sanchi
Takanosu
Higashi-Noshiro
Hachimantai plateau
Nyuto onsen
Oga
AKITA(p.145)
Tazawa Lake
Kakunodate
Omagari
Yokote
Sakata
Tsuruoka
Shinjo
Gassan
Aterazawa
Asahi
Sakamachi
Yamadera
Arato
SENDAI
NIIGATA(p.147)
Yamagata
Shibata
Zao onsen
Iide
Akakyu
Yonezawa
Fukushima

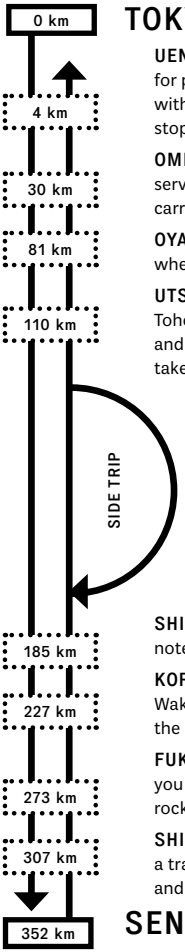
Tohoku

gawara
AOMORI (p.143)
Noheji
Owani-onsen
Towada Lake
Hachinohe
Odate
Kuji
Iwate
Shizukuishi
Ryusendo cave
Iwaizumi
Morioka (p.141)
Miyako
Hanamaki
Kitakami
Hiraizumi (p.139)
Kamaishi
Sakari
Ichinoseki
Kesennuma
Onagawa
Matsushima (p.137)
Sendai Bay

36 From Tokyo to Sendai

352 km total, **91 min** fastest journey, **81** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:04** → (A) **08:00** | Last Train (D) **21:44** → (A) **23:47**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:36** → (A) **08:07** | Last Train (D) **21:47** → (A) **23:44**

The Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train boasts the fastest operating speed of any of the lines in Japan. If you are heading this way, you can take the Hayabusa, which as well as having a very distinctive shaped nose, is the fastest of them all.



TOKYO

UENO Located on the Yamanote Line, this station is very useful for people staying in the north of Tokyo to board the shinkansen without the crowds of Tokyo Station. Almost all of the trains stop here.

OMIYA (SAITAMA) The Railway Museum is a short shuttle service away from this station. There are many real train carriages and engines to see here.

OYAMA (TOCHIGI) Only some Yamabiko services stop here, where you can change for the JR Mito Line.

UTSUNOMIYA Utsunomiya is a major train hub served by the Tohoku Shinkansen Line, JR Tohoku Main Line, Tobu Nikko Line and JR Utsunomiya Line. Change here for Nikko (see p.25) and take the JR Nikko Line (41 min, a train every hour).

NASU-SHIOBARA is the area around Mt. Nasudake, an active volcano in Nikko National Park, with forested highlands and home to several hot springs including Nasu Onsen on the volcano's slopes and Shiobara Onsen, as well as various hiking trails that lead to waterfalls and suspension bridges along the mountain's slopes. The Nasu Ropeway climbs about 800 meters up the side of Mt. Nasudake. From the upper station it is a further 30-45 minute hike to the peak.

SHIN-SHIRAKAWA With a castle and a park, there is little else of note to deserve a special visit here.

KORIYAMA (FUKUSHIMA) Change here to head to Aizu-Wakamatsu, famous for sake and one of the last strongholds of the samurai.

FUKUSHIMA If you climb Mt. Shinobu, in the center of town, you can find Iwaya-Kannon with 60 Buddhas carved into the rock and you can get a good view of the city.

SHIROISHI ZAO Not far from the station you can find a traditional merchant house, a doll museum, a samurai house and a traditionally restored castle.

SENDAI

Take the JR Tohoku Line (track n°2 at the station) for a 20-minute ride to Matsushima (see opposite page).

Matsushima

WHAT TO SEE

MATSUSHIMA ISLANDS Located half an hour outside of Sendai, the city is famous for its bay dotted with over 200 small islands covered by pine trees. For centuries, it has been ranked one of Japan's three most scenic views, along side Miyajima and Amanohashidate. A good way to enjoy the bay is to get on a cruise boat. Operated by multiple sightseeing cruise companies, there are round trips starting and ending at Matsushima and boats from Matsushima to the nearby city of Shiogama. Longer cruises will get you to the more remote areas of Oku-Matsushima, which are less spoiled by industrial and urban development.

WHERE TO STAY

MATSUSHIMA CENTURY HOTEL 松島センチュリーホテル
A great hotel for sightseeing. Located a 5-minute walk to the ferry port to Fukuura Island. Close to the ocean you will have a great view of the neighboring islands from the balcony.
Senzui 8, Matsushima-cho, Miyagi-gun, Miyagi, 981-0213
02-2354-4111
https://ssl.centuryhotel.co.jp/lg_en/

HOTEL UBUDO ホテル 海風土 A new type of ryokan, combining Japanese and Western style, with an excellent location. From Matsushima Kaigan Station on the JR Senseki Line, take the Matsushima Loop Bus for about 10 minutes to the Hotel Ubudo Mae stop.
5-3 Higashihama, Matsushima, Miyagi-gun, 981-0213
02-2355-0022
www.ubudo.jp (*The website is in japanese but you can choose « reservation in english »*)

WHERE TO EAT

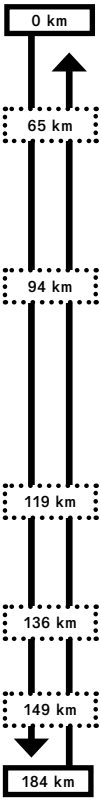
SHOBIAN 松美庵 This sweets café is perfect for a nice break along Matsushima Bay, with its clean and modern interior and spectacular view of the bay. Shobian is across the main road from Matsushima National Park, about a 6-minute walk east down route 45 from Matsushima Kaigan Station.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
022-354-4016
www.matsukama.jp/shop/shobian.html

KAKIGOYA かき小屋 If you're strolling alongside the picturesque Matsushima Bay, naturally seafood is your best choice of cuisine! This highly-rated restaurant is where the locals come for 50 minutes of all-you-can-eat fresh oysters at a reasonable price. From the eastern end of Matsushima National Park, continue to walk along the bayside beach. When the path ends, turn left, and Kakigoya is a little shack on your right.
Open daily during oyster season (October through March), with their hour-long all-you-can-eat rounds starting at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 1 p.m., and 2 p.m.
02-2354-2618

37 From Sendai to Morioka

184 km total, **39 min** fastest journey, **3** trains per hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:40** → (A) **07:49** | Last Train (D) **22:20** → (A) **23:31**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:10** → (A) **07:19** | Last Train (D) **21:51** → (A) **23:01**

Just after Sendai, the landscape is hidden by a succession of tunnels, but after a few minutes it reappears, revealing outstanding views of rural Japan to the left and right of the train. Most services run non-stop from Sendai to Morioka, but Yamabiko services stop along the way.
This latter route is described below.



SENDAI

KURIKOMA-KOGEN The shinkansen station of Kurihara City, known for its rice production and the 1 627-meter-high Mt. Kurikoma, a dormant volcano straddling the tri-prefectural border of Miyagi, Akita and Iwate.

ICHINOSEKI Disembark here to visit the aptly-named Genbikei (Gorge of Harsh Beauty), a gorge which features white water rushing over rocks, a few waterfalls and several hot spring hotels. If you are visiting during the cherry blossom season in early spring, head for Tsuriyama, a large hill located directly west of the station. Lit up by lanterns, it is as gorgeous at night as it is during the daytime. Change here for Hiraizumi (see opposite page). Only 8 kilometers north of Ichinoseki, reached in less than 10 minutes by local trains on the JR Tohoku Line.

MIZUSAWAESASHI The shinkansen station of Oshu City. Stop here to get a bite of the famous, delicious, fatty, marbled 'Maesawa beef' that is a growing competitor to the legendary Kobe and Matsuzaka beef. It is melt-in-your-mouth delicious. To get the full experience, try the raw Maezawa beef sushi.

KITAKAMI A city famous for the more than 10000 cherry trees planted alongside the Kitakami River in Tenshochi Park. The trees are usually in bloom for one to two weeks around late April and form a beautiful tunnel of cherry blossoms.

SHIN-HANAMAKI The shinkansen station for Hanamaki, a town historically know for its many onsen.

MORIOKA

Hiraizumi

WHAT TO SEE

CHUSON-JI TEMPLE Hiraizumi is home to the Konjiki-do (Golden Hall) within Chuson-ji Temple, which attempts to recreate an ideal Buddhist world in this world. Decorated inside and out with lacquer containing gold leaf and studded with gold and silver, a symbol of the gold culture of Hiraizumi, the temple alone is worth the journey from Tokyo.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (4:30 p.m. in winter), ¥800).
A tourist bus runs in a loop from the train station to Chuson-ji, then on to Motsu-ji (see below) then returns to the train station.

MOTSU-JI TEMPLE Another must see here is the Motsu-ji Temple, famous for its Jodo ('Pure Land') garden. As such, it is host to an ensemble of exquisite 'culture of gold' remnants from the brand of Buddhism that developed independently in the Tohoku Region far away from the cultural center of Kyoto in the late Heian period of the 11th century. UNESCO has recognized this area as being a globally rare example of local culture for the transitional period from the ancient era to the medieval period. It is now listed as a World Heritage Site.
Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (4:30 p.m. in winter) ¥500.

WHERE TO STAY

HIRAIZUMI HOTEL MUSASHIBO 武蔵坊 A 12-minute walk from Hiraizumi Station. It is situated with easy access to the major sighseeing spots such as Chuson-ji, Motsu-ji Temple.
15 Hiraizumi, Hiraizumi-cho, Nishiiwai-gun, Iwate, 029-4102
01-9146-2241
http://www.musasibou.com/en/

KURA HOTEL ICHINOSEKI 蔵ホテル一関 A 3-minute walk from JR Ichinoseki Station. Close to Chusonji Temple and Motsu-ji Temple, with a lovely garden.
2-1 Ote-machi, Ichinoseki-shi, Iwate, 021-0884
01-9131-1111
http://kurahotel.com/index.php

WHERE TO EAT

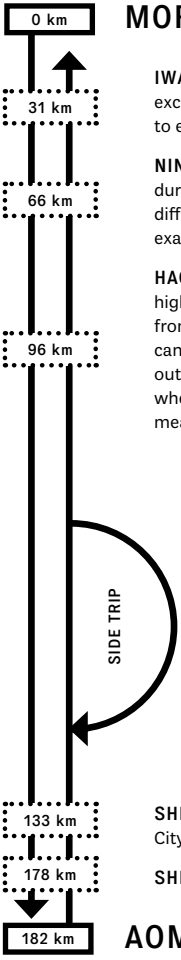
SOBADOKORO YOSHIIE そば処義家 A rustic restaurant on the outskirts of the city, that serves soba. Located north on the main highway leading from Hiraizumi Station.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m
01-9146-4369

EKIMAE BASHOKAN 駅前芭蕉館 Named after Hiraizumi's most beloved poet, this restaurant serves a delicious set lunch of Iwate's famous wanko soba, tempura, and fruit. Located just west of the station.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
01-9146-5555
www.wankosoba.com

38 From Morioka to Aomori

182 km total, **67 min** fastest journey, **1** train every hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:54** → (A) **08:09** | Last Train (D) **22:31** → (A) **23:51**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:41** → (A) **07:09** | Last Train (D) **21:24** → (A) **22:48**

The shinkansen line between Morioka and Aomori opened in 2010 and includes the famous 26.5 km long Hakkoda Tunnel. Shinkansen stops at Shin Aomori where you have to make a connection to Aomori (JR Line - 4 mins)



MORIOKA

IWATE-NUMAKUNAI Unfortunately, the train runs almost exclusively through tunnels until this point, so it is not possible to enjoy the scenery.

NINOHE The name Ninohe means 'the second door', because during medieval times, this part of Japan was divided into different political districts, each of them known as a 'door'. For example the next stop, Hachinoe, means 'the eighth door'.

HACHINOE A good spot to observe the shinkansen running at high speed is the 'South Bridge' waiting area as you come up from the shinkansen platforms. It overlooks the tracks so you can see the train speeding into the distance. If you want to step out of the station, you can visit the Hachinohe Seafood Market, where you can buy fresh seafood and have a nice charcoal BBQ meal. Change here for Lake Towadako.

LAKE TOWADAKO is at the top of a 400-meter-high forested mountain on the border between Aomori and Akita. It is a dual crater lake that was formed by the caving in of a volcano mouth, formed by a giant eruption. With a depth of 327 meters, the lake is the third deepest in Japan and its water is so translucent that you can see down to 10 meters. Towadako is a popular autumn colors destination, especially along the Oirase Stream at the lake's eastern shore, one of Japan's most famous spots to see autumn foliage. Towadako's shores remain largely undeveloped with the exception of the small town of Yasumiya. The JR Tohoku Bus bound for Towadako, makes stops along the Oirase Stream before terminating in Yasumiya.

SHICHINOHE-TOWADA The shinkansen station of Shichinohe City.

SHIN-AOMORI The shinkansen station of Aomori City.

AOMORI

Morioka

WHAT TO SEE

IWATE KOEN Morioka is a busy commercial and industrial city ringed by mountains. To savor the richness of its alpine landscapes, head for the Iwate Koen. This park, large enough to get lost in, provides a magnificient panoramic view of the whole of Morioka and famous Mt. Iwate. It features an astonishing variety of flowers and trees, shady groves, streams and beautiful colors in every season.
To get there from the JR Morioka Station, cross the Kai-un Bridge. There are three streets that meet there; walk straight down the middle one.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL METROPOLITAN MORIOKA ホテルメトロポリタン盛岡 A simple, yet comfortable hotel well located to explore the city. Just a few minutes walk from Morioka Station. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
1-44 Morioka, Ekimae-dori, Morioka-shi, Iwate, 020-0034
01-9625-1211
http://www.jrhotelgroup.com/en/105.html

HOTEL SHION つなぎ温泉 ホテル紫苑 Located on the east side of Morioka, you can relax in their natural hot spring bath. They have Western-style and Japanese-style rooms available. There is a great view of the lake from the hotel.
74-2 Yunodate, Tsunagi, Morioka, Iwate, 020-0055
01-9689-2288
http://www.hotel-shion.com/

WHERE TO EAT

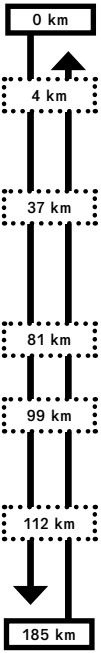
HOT JAJA ホットジャジャ Taste Morioka's famous noodle dish, Jaja-men, right next to the station. From Morioka Station's south exit, head straight onto Route 2. The restaurant will be on the left, its name written in English on a bright red and green cloth sign.
Open daily, 10 a.m. to midnight.
01-9606-1068
www.pyonpyonsya.co.jp/shop/shop11#

PYON PYON SHA ぴょんぴょん舎 Morioka's other famous noodles, Rei-men, are cold noodles served with beef, vegetables, kimchi, and a slice of fruit. Pyon Pyon Sha specializes in Rei-men and is located right next to the station. From Morioka Station's south exit, head straight onto Route 2, then take the first left. Pyon Pyon Sha is on the left.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to midnight.
01-9606-1067
http://www.pyonpyonsya.co.jp/shop/shop02

39 From Aomori to Akita

185 km total, **157 min** fastest journey, **1** train every hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **05:41** → (A) **08:43** | Last Train (D) **18:25** → (A) **21:56**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:27** → (A) **08:50** | Last Train (D) **19:32** → (A) **22:18**

If on the first part of the journey the JR trains from Aomori to Akita via Odate run through residential areas, the landscape gradually opens up to reveal beautiful scenery of the Japanese countryside. The main sight from the train is Mt. Iwaki, spiritual symbol of the area. Look out for it in the distance, to the right, about 20 minutes after leaving Aomori. Connections are sometimes needed in Hirosaki and Odate. There are only 3 direct train per day (Limited express Tsugaru)



AOMORI

SHIN-AOMORI The shinkansen station of Aomori City.

HIROSAKI Known as the first apple production area in Japan, Hirosaki is the perfect place to sip a delicious apple wine, sparkling and refreshing. Do not miss Hirosaki Castle: thousands of cherry trees are planted around the castle grounds, making it one of Japan's most spectacular cherry blossom spots. The trees are usually in bloom in late April to early May. It is located 15 minutes west of the JR Hirosaki Station by the Dotemachi Loop Bus. Get off at the Shiyakusho-mae bus stop.

ODATE Dog enthusiasts will be happy to visit the hometown of the famous Japanese Akita dogs.

TAKANOSU From here to Moritake, you can enjoy the typical scenery of rice fields in the foreground and pine trees in the distance.

FUTATSUI Futatsui is famous for having the tallest virgin cedar tree in Japan, as well as a hill, Kimimachi-zaka — named by the Emperor when he came to visit the town. Kimimachi-zaka is especially well-known for its autumn leaves, and the park that covers the hill is extensive and well maintained.

AKITA

Aomori

WHAT TO SEE

THE NEBUTA MATSURI Aomori City is a port town, which used to be the main departure point to the northern-most island Hokkaido, from Honshu. Today Aomori is best-known for its spectacular Nebuta Matsuri, held every year from August 2nd to 7th. The highlight of the festival is the daily parade of enormous lantern floats, flanked by large taiko drums, cheerful musicians and vigorous dancers. Participation in the parade is highly encouraged, and people come from all over Japan to join it. One requirement though: you have to wear the traditional haneto dancing costume. Don't worry, it can be bought at any grocery store around the area for about ¥5000 or rented from rental stores around town for about ¥3000. The Nebuta Matsuri parade route is a three kilometer loop around central Aomori and is a 5-minute walk from JR Aomori Station.

WHERE TO STAY

HOSHINO RESORT OIRASE KEIRYUU 星野リゾート 奥入瀬渓流ホテル Hotel right next to Oirase Stream, surronded by beautiful nature and mountains. They have excellent baths with hot spring water directly from Mt. Hakkoda.
231 Aza-Tochikubo, Oaza Okuse, Towada-shi, Aomori 034-0398
01-7674-1111
or 50-3786-1144 (Hoshino Resorts Reservation Center)
http://www.oirase-keiryuu.jp/en/
Free pick up service available from JR-Shin Aomori Station

AOMORI KOKUSAI HOTEL 青森国際ホテル 5 minutes on foot from Aomori Station. The hotel is located in the heart of Aomori City, right beside the famous Uosai (morning market).
1-6-18 Shin-machi, Aomori, 030-0801
01-7722-4321
www.kokusai-hotel.co.jp

WHERE TO EAT

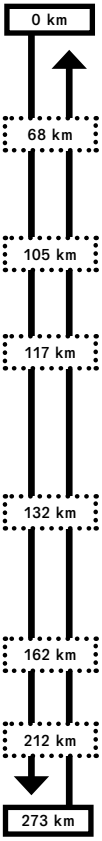
AOMORI GYOSAI CENTER 青森魚菜センター Just a few minutes south of the station, this big fish market serves tons of fresh fish on top of rice for a very low price. From the east exit of Aomori Station, walk south and turn left at the Family Mart onto Shinmachi-dori. Take the next right and continue on past the traffic light; the fish market will be on the left.
Open 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed Tuesdays.
http://nokkedon.jp/nokkedon/
01-7763-0085

RINGOYA 林檎家 Named after Aomori's most famous produce, the apple, Ringoya actually serves another very famous product of northern Japan — lamb. From the station's east exit, walk straight down Shinmachi-dori. Ringoya is on the left, just before the traffic light and a big intersection.
Open 5 p.m. to midnight. Closed Sundays.
01-7775-5776

40 From Akita to Niigata

273 km total, **211 min** fastest journey, **3** direct trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **09:16** → (A) **12:57** | Last Train (D) **16:35** → (A) **20:09**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **08:22** → (A) **12:03** | Last Train (D) **15:00** → (A) **18:41**

Facing Sado island, Niigata is often called the 'City of water' because of the two rivers flowing through it, its position next to the Japan Sea, its many wetlands, and the canals that used to run through the old town. Skirting the coast, the route from Niigata to Akita with the Limited express Inaho has the same theme.



AKITA

KISAKATA From Kisakata and for 40 km, you will have beautiful views to the left, of the mountains in Chokai National Park. One of them is Mt. Chokai (2236 m), a semi-dormant volcano known as the Mt. Fuji of Akita. As the train enters Yamagata Prefecture, mountains give way to the coast, with views out to sea on the right.

SAKATA A large port town located at the mouth of the Mogami-gawa River.

AMARUME Amarume Station is a stop on the Uetsu Line and also the terminus for the Riku Saisen Line running east to Shinjo. If you want to go back to Tokyo, change here for a local train to Shinjo (50 min), from where you can pick up the shinkansen which runs via Yamagata south to the capital.

TSURUOKA The nearest station to the Dewa-Sanzan mountain chain (Three Mountains of Dewa), of which the most famous peak is Mt. Haguro (414 m), considered to be home to the kami, the spirits honored in the Japanese indigenous religion, Shinto. If you wish to undertake a spiritual cleansing, follow the crowd of pilgrims and hop on one of the buses that take 45 minutes from Tsuruoka station to Mt. Haguro.

ATSUMI-ONSEN In between mountains and the coast, Atsumi served as a border checkpoint for travelers more than 1000 years ago. Nowadays, the town is a hot spring resort.

MURAKAMI The railway line runs along the coast as far as Murakami. Unfortunately, the many tunnels prevent passengers from enjoying the landscape.

NIIGATA

Akita

WHAT TO SEE

THE KANTO MATSURI The city is best-known for hosting the Kanto Matsuri, a large festival at the beginning of August (3rd to 6th). The highlight of the festival is an impressive display of skill in which performers balance kanto (long bamboo poles) with arrays of paper lanterns attached to the end. The main events of the festival, the Night Parades, are held each evening along Chuo-dori in the center of the city. The various performing groups, carrying nearly 250 kanto poles, line up on the street, and when a signal is given, the poles are all raised up at once and the performers show off their skills. Chuo-dori is about a 15-minute walk west of Akita Station.

WHERE TO STAY

HOTEL METROPOLITAN AKITA ホテル メトロポリタン 秋田
One minute on foot from Akita Station. The closest hotel to the station. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
7-2-1 Naka-dori, Akita, 010-8530
01-8831-2222
http://www.jrhotelgroup.com/en/104.html

RICHMOND HOTEL AKITA-EKI MAE リッチモンドホテル秋田 前
Only 5 minutes on foot away from Akita station, the hotel is convenient, well-equiped and clean with high quality service.
2-2-26 Naka-dori, Akita, 010-0001
01-8884-0055
http://akita.richmondhotel.jp

YUZE HOTEL 湯瀬 ホテル A unique hot spring destination in the beautiful Yuze Valley, not far from the best sightseeing locations in the region. Guests can relax in the hot springs and indulge in traditional Japanese cooking at the restaurant. Rooms are well appointed and staff are friendly and helpful.
43 Yuze Yutan Hachimantai, Kazuno, Akita, 018-5141
01-8633-2311
www.yuzehotel.jp

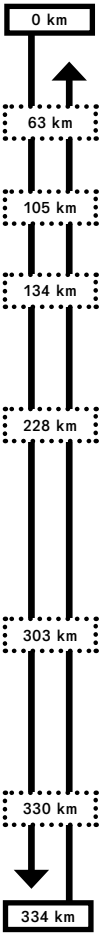
WHERE TO EAT

SATO YOSUKE 佐藤養助 Akita's famous inaniwa udon, very close to the station. From the west exit of Akita Station, head west on the main road, Akita Chuo Road. It is on the left, on the basement floor of Akita View Hotel.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
01-8834-1720
www.sato-yoske.co.jp/home.html

41 From Niigata to Tokyo

334 km total, **99 min** fastest journey, **1** train every hour
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:09** → (A) **08:12** | Last Train (D) **21:34** → (A) **23:40**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:08** → (A) **08:13** | Last Train (D) **21:40** → (A) **23:56**

The fastest way of returning to Tokyo from Niigata is by Joetsu shinkansen, the route described below. If you have more time and are prepared to change trains, you could consider the local Banetsu-sei Line that runs inland from Niigata, via Mikawa, and the castle town of Aizu Wakamatsu, to Koriyama on the Tohoku Shinkansen Line.



NIIGATA

NAGAOKA The Nagaoka Fireworks are the most spectacular of three outstanding firework shows in Niigata Prefecture. They take place from August 2nd to 3rd, along the Shinano River which is located a 20-minute walk from Nagaoka Station.

URASA Urasa station is a major hub of Niigata Prefecture. Urasa is also home to enthusiasts of the local naked festival.

ECHIGO-YUZAWA Yuzawa is one of the largest and the most easily accessed ski areas from Tokyo. Yuzawa is known for deep powder and a long season, with some of its resorts open from mid-November to late May.

TAKASAKI The capital of the daruma doll, a good luck charm representing a famous Zen monk. Daruma dolls are traditionally bought at the beginning of each new year without pupils painted on. A wish is then made and one of the doll's pupils is painted on. If the wish comes true, the second pupil is also added and the doll is returned to the temple or shrine at the end of the year to be burnt.

OMIYA Change here for the local Tobu Noda Line and hop off at Toro Station if you want to visit the Omiya Bonsai Village in Saitama City. This tranquil neighborhood, two train station north of Omiya Station, is home to multiple bonsai nurseries and to a superb bonsai art museum. They welcome walk-in visitors, but do not allow photography. They sell a wide selection of bonsai as well as relevant gardening tools. Nursery owners are generally happy to answer questions and appreciate any interest shown in bonsai. Free, closed on Thursdays.

UENO Stop here for a stroll in Ueno Koen, a large public park just next to Ueno Station in central Tokyo. Ueno Park is one of Tokyo's most popular and lively cherry blossom spots with more than 1 000 cherry trees lining its central pathway.

TOKYO

Niigata

WHAT TO SEE

HOPPO BUNKA KEIKAN Sixty-five rooms, five tea houses, a special art gallery and beautiful gardens; this mansion on the banks of the Agano River is now a museum open to all. The museum is a 40-minute bus ride from Niigata Station, but the traditional garden and the artistically arranged landscape of the garden are worth the trip.
Apr.-Nov. from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Dec.-Mar. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

BANETSU WEST LINE What about having a taste of time travel on the Banetsu West Line? This railway line, operated by East Japan Railway Company (JR East), runs between Koriyama Station and Niitsu Station in Niigata. The line's nickname is the Mori to Mizu to Roman no Tetsudo, meaning 'the water, forest, and nostalgia railway'. Why? Because an old steam locomotive operates between the town of Niitsu and Aizu-Wakamatsu. All seats are reserved so you need to book in advance at any JR travel agency (free if you have the JR Pass). Tickets go on sale one month in advance and are often sold out within a day.

WHERE TO STAY

CHISUN HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER NIIGATA チサン ホテル & コンファレンスセンター 新潟 The best location, directly connected to JR Niigata station.
1-1 Sasaguchi, Chuo-ku, Niigata, 950-0911
02 5284 2711
http://www.solarehotels.com/hotel/koshinetsu/niigata/chisuninn-niigatachuo-ic.html

WHERE TO EAT

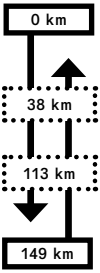
IKANOSUMI いかの墨 An izakaya praised for its simple and delicious food as well as its wonderful ambiance. Only 2 minutes from the station! From the north exit of the station, turn right onto the main road. Ikanosumi is on the left, past a Lawson store and across the street from Niigata Daiichi Hotel.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to midnight.
02-5242-0510

ICHIGO-ICHIE JURO 越後一会十郎 This restaurant serves Niigata's most well-known foods: its tasty rice, fresh fish, and delicious sake. From the station's Mandai exit, head straight up the main road and turn left at the first traffic light. Take the first right, and the restaurant will be on your right.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 1 a.m.
02-5247-5106
http://www.ideal-co.jp/jyurou.html

42 From Shin-Aomori to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto

149 km total, **1h01** festest journey, 13 train per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **6:32** (A) **7:38** | Last Train (D) **22:32** (A) **23:33**
<**RETURN**> First Train (A) **6:35** (D) **7:41** | Last Train (D) **21:59** (D) **23:05**

From March 2016, the shinkansen line connecting Honshu to Hokkaido opened. It goes from Shin-Aomori to Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto through the Seikan Tunnel, the longest underwater tunnel in the world. Once in Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto, the train «Hakodate Liner» operates 16 shuttle services per day between Shin-Hakodate-Hokuto Station and Hakodate station. There are also easy connections to Sapporo (see page 152).



SHIN AOMORI

OKUTSUGARU-IMABETSU This is the last stop in Honshu and the station is designed as a gate in the style of Imabetsu 's symbolic Seikan Tunnel Arch.

KIKONAI This is the first stop in Hokkaido. Change here and take a bus to go to Esashi.

SHIN-HAKODATE-HOKUTO

The Shinkansen station of Hakodate.

Hakodate

WHAT TO SEE

ASA-ICHI The morning market. There are stalls filled with fresh catches of crab and squid, as well as fruit and vegetables. It is the place to try a fish-on-rice breakfast.
Open daily, 5 a.m. until noon, closed on Sun. in winter.

MOTOMACHI The historic area of Hakodate. The sloping streets are lined with 19th century churches, consulates, shops and the homes of the Japanese and foreigners who first opened up this part of Japan to commerce.

MT. HAKODATE AFTER DARK Mt. Hakodate rises 334 m above sea level and provides superb views of the twinkling lights of Hakodate. You can reach the summit by the Mt. Hakodate Ropeway from Motomachi. From spring to autumn, a walking path is open and a bus service from the station is also available.
Ropeway, late April-mid-Oct., daily, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., mid-Oct.-late April 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., ¥1160.
Bus, mid-April-mid-Nov., ¥360.

WHERE TO STAY

B&B PENSION HAKODATE MURA ペンションはこだて村 Unique and charming family-run guest house. A 15-minute walk from Hakodate Station and within walking distance of main transport and sightseeing spots.
16-12 Suehiro-cho, Hakodate, Hokkaido, 040-0053
01-3822-8105
bb-hakodatemura.com

HAKODATE DANSHAKU CLUB 男爵倶楽部 A resort hotel right next to the station. You will have a great view of Mt. Hakodate and the port.
22-10 Otemachi, Hakodate, Hokkaido, 040-0064
01-3821-1111
www.danshaku-club.com/en

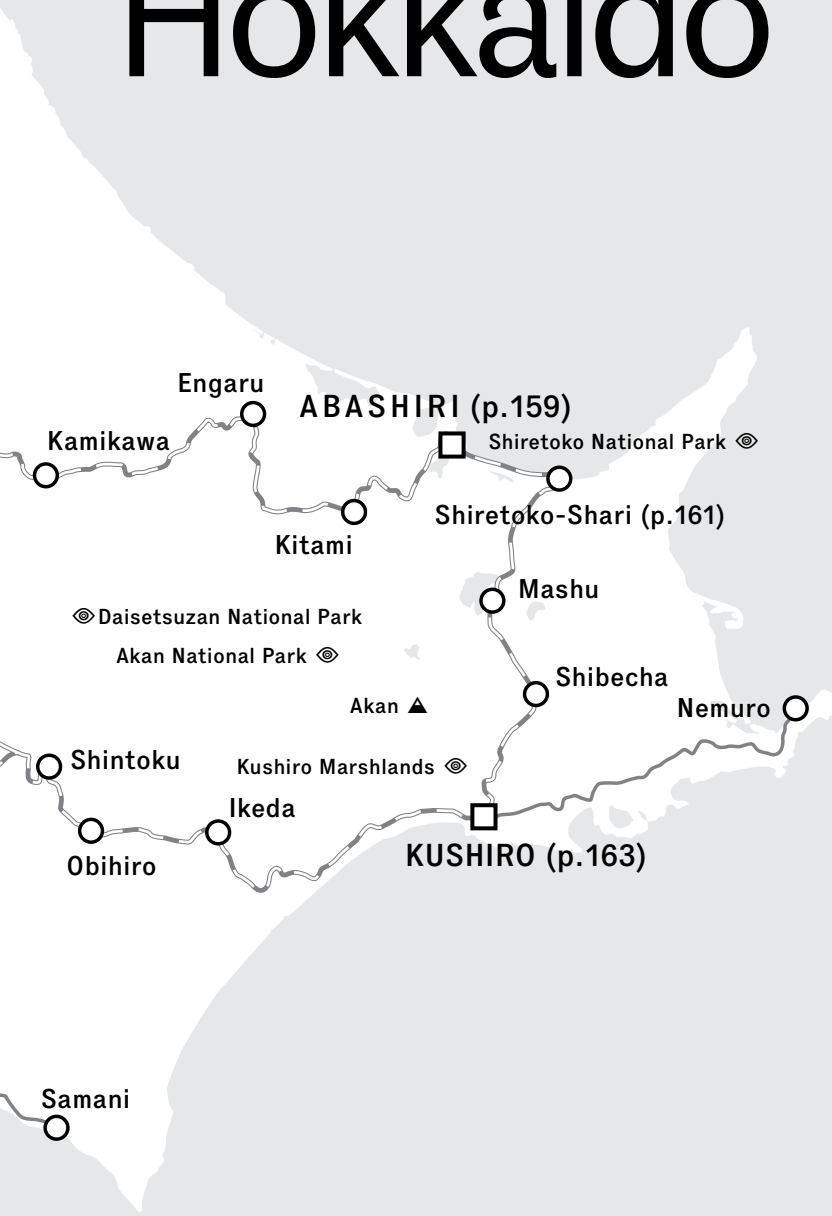
WHERE TO EAT

SHIKI HANAKATEI 四季 粋花亭 A mix of eastern and western flavors served in an elegant Japanese style. Located north of the Goryokaku Koen Mae Station, on the corner of Hokushi-dori and Goryokakutokeidai-dori.
Open 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., closed Wednesdays.
01-3851-1810
shikisuikatei.web.fc2.com

TAZAWA 田ざわ Local seafood, handpicked and delicately fried. This is not your average tempura! From Suginachimachi Station, walk east along the road past Iai High School and Tazawa is on your left.
Open 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
01-3856-2023
gourmet.hakonavi.ne.jp/japanese/tazawa

Rishiri Island
WAKKANAI (p.157)
Otoineppu
Nayoro
Mashike
Fukagawa
ASAHIKAWA (p.155)
Shin-Totsukawa
Furano
Otaru
Iwamizawa
Yubari
SAPPORO (p.153)
Shikotsu-Toya National Park
Oiwake
Tomamu
Niseko
Shikotsu Lake
New Chitose Airport
Tomakomai
Toya Lake
Oshamambe
Noboribetsu
Muroran
Esashi
Onuma
HAKODATE (P.149)
Kikonai
Osore

Hokkaido


Engaru
ABASHIRI (p.159)
Kamikawa
Shiretoko National Park
Shiretoko-Shari (p.161)
Kitami
Mashu
Daisetsuzan National Park
Akan National Park
Shibecha
Akan
Nemuro
Shintoku
Kushiro Marshlands
Ikeda
Obihiro
KUSHIRO (p.163)
Samani

43 From Hakodate to Sapporo

319 km total, **211 min** fastest journey, **12** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:10** → (A) **09:48** | Last Train (D) **19:54** → (A) **23:40**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:00** → (A) **09:27** | Last Train (D) **20:00** → (A) **23:31**

The quickest way to Sapporo from Hakodate is to take the Hokuto or the Super Hokuto on the Hakodate Line.

0 km

HAKODATE

If you are seated on the left-hand side of the train, you will have views of Lake Konuma, about 20 minutes after leaving Hakodate.

19 km

SHIN HAKUDATE HOKUTO The shinkansen station of Hakodate.

27 km

ONUMA-KOEN Access from here to Mt. Komagatake. There are hiking trails around the volcano or you can view it from the lakes: Onuma, or the smaller Konuma or Junsainuma. It is possible to hire pedal boats, motorboats and canoes, or to take a pleasure boat tour.
As the train leaves the station, there are beautiful views of Lake Onuma on the right and Lake Konuma on the left.

50 km

MORI From here the train curves around Uchiura Bay on the right.

112 km

OSHAMAMBE Here our journey continues on the Muroran Line, although it is possible to change here to travel on an alternative route to Sapporo via Niseko and Otaru.

154 km

TOYA Not all limited express trains stop here. You can visit Toya-ko, a caldera lake in the Shikotsu-Toya National Park. The G8 was held in Toya in 2008 and it is possible to visit the Summit Memorial Museum.

207 km

NOBORIBETSU Noboribetsu-onsen is a short bus journey from the station. The main source of the hot spring water is Jigokudani (Hell Valley), which lies just above the town and displays hot steam vents, sulfurous streams and other volcanic activity.

275 km

MINAMI-CHITOSE Change here for Shin-Chitose Airport Station, 3 minutes away by local train. It is the nearest airport to Sapporo.

319 km

SAPPORO

Sapporo

WHAT TO SEE

SAPPORO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAZA This is the best place for travel, restaurant and nightlife suggestions in Hokkaido.

BOTANIC GARDEN Opened in 1886. 32 acres of garden containing more than 4 000 varieties of plants gathered from across Hokkaido. Within the garden is Japan's oldest natural science museum. Opposite the garden is the Ainu Museum.
May-Oct., ¥420; Nov.-Apr., gardens free, greenhouse ¥120. Apr.-Sept., daily, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Oct. & Nov., daily, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Dec.-Mar., weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

ODORI PARK Stretches for 1.5 km through the center of the city. The park is transformed into a giant beer garden for the Sapporo Beer Festival in July and August. It also hosts the annual Sapporo Snow Festival in early February.

WHERE TO STAY

JR TOWER HOTEL NIKKO SAPPORO JR タワーホテル日航札幌 The hotel is connected to JR Sapporo Station and is well located for exploring the city along with direct transport by train to the airport. Special discount for Japan Rail Pass holders.
Nishi 2, Kita 5, Chuo-ku, Sapporo, 060-0005
01-1251-2222
www.jrhotels.co.jp/tower/english

NAKAMURA RYOKAN 中村屋旅館 A Japanese inn, 10 minutes on foot from Sapporo Station. Enjoy the Japanese style rooms, traditional meals and English language spoken by the staff.
N3 W7, Chuo-ku, Sapporo, Hokkaido, 060-0003
01-1241-2111
http://www.nakamurayaryokan.com/en-gb

WHERE TO EAT

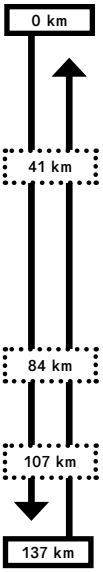
SUSHISAI WAKICHI 鮨菜 和喜智 The ultimate experience in fine-dining sushi. Located on Minami Ichijo-dori, one street south of Maruyama Koen subway station.
Open daily, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m, open for lunch on Saturdays noon to 2 p.m.
01-1640-3768

CURRY DI.SAVOY カリー・ディ・サヴォイ A big bowl of soup curry is one of Hokkaido's many famous dishes, and Curry Di.SAVoY is one of many restaurants specializing in it. Located a short walk south of Sapporo JR Station, across Odori Park, directly next to the Nishi 4 Chome street car station.
Open daily, 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.
01-1219-7810
http://www.s-curry.com/shop.php?sid=30

44 From Sapporo to Asahikawa

137 km total, **85 min** fastest journey, **30** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:35** → (A) **08:00** | Last Train (D) **21:00** → (A) **22:25**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:18** → (A) **06:43** | Last Train (D) **22:00** → (A) **23:25**

Trains from Sapporo to Asahikawa are quite frequent. Views at the beginning of the journey are not so impressive, as it takes some time to leave Sapporo, but then you will begin to see the open spaces once again.



SAPPORO

IWAMIZAWA It lies along the levee of the Ikushunbetsu River. Iwamizawa developed around the railway station built on the levee in 1882. With the opening of three other railway lines by 1914, the town became an important transportation center connected with the nearby Ishikari Coalfield. Despite the decline in the coal-mining industry, the city continues to be a prosperous local administrative and commercial center. Food processing, brewing, and ceramics manufacturing are the city's main industries.

TAKIKAWA The town is conveniently situated at the point at which the Ishikari River, Japan's third longest river, merges with the Sorachi River, making it a sought after destination for all manner of water sports. This small city is known for its heavy snowfall in winter.

FUKAGAWA Most visitors stop here to access Mt. Kamui, a popular ski resort, technically in Asahikawa, but only minutes away from Fukagawa by car or bus.

ASAHIKAWA

Asahikawa

WHAT TO SEE

ASAHIYAMA ZOO The zoo is located just outside Asahikawa. A bus service runs from the station. The zoo is a good place to see animals native to Hokkaido, such as brown bears, deer and eagles. It is popular as it allows visitors to view the animals from different angles. Highlights include a glass tunnel through the penguin pool and a transparent dome in the middle of the polar bear enclosure.
Late Apr-mid-Oct, daily, 9:30 a.m. to 5:15 p.m.; Nov- early Apr, Fri-Tues, 10.30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., closed early April, ¥820.

ASAHIKAWA SCIENCE CENTER Also known as Sci-pal, the center opened in 2005 and includes modern interactive exhibitions and a planetarium. You can also experience zero gravity.
Tues-Sun, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥400, planetarium ¥300, both ¥500.

WHERE TO STAY

ASAHIKAWA SUPER HOTEL スーパーホテル旭川 Reasonable price, 5 minutes from the station on foot. You can also enjoy a natural hot spring at the hotel.
11-767-3 Miyashita-dori, Asahikawa, Hokkaido, 070-0030
01-6621-9000
www.superhoteljapan.com/en/s-hotels/asahikawa

SENSHOEN 扇松園 A very well-known ryokan in Asahikawa. Famous for providing authentic Japanese hospitality and ambiance at a reasonable price. Enjoy their meals prepared using local produce.
3-8-3 Takasagodai, Asahikawa, Hokkaido, 070-8061
01-6661-5154
http://www.sensyoen.co.jp/english/index.html

WHERE TO EAT

AOBA 旭川らぅめんあ青葉本店 Asahikawa's take on ramen, with a soy sauce broth and topped with a generous slice of nori seaweed. From exit one of Asahikawa Station, walk up Midori-bashi-dori; Aoba will be on your left.
Open daily, 9:30 a.m. to 7:50 p.m.
01-6623-2820
www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~aoba1948/

TAISETSU BREWERY BEER HALL 大雪地ビール館
The local microbrewery's restaurant, set in a brick building, with a Western vibe.
Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
01-6625-0400
www.ji-beer.com

45 From Asahikawa to Wakkanai

259 km total, **214 min** fastest journey, **5** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **9:00** → (A) **12:40** | Last Train (D) **20:06** → (A) **23:47**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:36** → (A) **10:19** | Last Train (D) **17:46** → (A) **21:26**

The route is covered by three Super Soya Service per day. This is a limited express train which runs between Sapporo (see page 153) and Wakkanai.

0 km

ASAHIKAWA

54 km

WASSAMU Within the vicinity of the station you can find a small ski area and South Hill Forest Park with a lake for canoeing and fishing. You can also visit the former residence of Miura Ayako, a Japanese novelist who published over 80 works. Her debut novel was published in 1964 and won the Asahi Shimbun's Ten Million Yen Award that year.

76 km

NAYORO The vast sunflower fields make it a nice spot to visit in late July to mid-August. It has attracted the attention of various media, and the city was used as the filming location for the movie Hoshi Mamoru Inu (Star Protector Dog). Very snowy winters mean incredible snow sculptures are a part of the Nayoro Snow Festival each year. The town is also home to the Kitasubaru Nayoro Astronomical Observatory. The observatory's exhibition-space displays real-time solar telescope images, showcases the previous planetarium's projector and provides information about Hideo Kihara (1911–1993) – a key figure in the development of astronomical observation in Nayoro.

98 km

BIFUKA This is home to the Bifuka Sturgeon Museum, a small facility which maintains eight species of sturgeon fish. Sturgeon were found in the Teshio River as far as Bifuka, until the Meiji Period.

199 km

HORONOBE The word Horonobe originates from Poro-Nup. In Ainu language, poro means large and nup means grassland. The north 45° latitude passes through this town and is marked by a monument. Horonobe is also known for its reindeer; you can visit the Reindeer Ranch (398-1 Hokushin, Horonobe-cho, a 5-minute taxi ride from the station), and its wind turbines located on the beaches.

216 km

TOYOTOMI This is an access point to visit the Sarobetsu Plain. The plain is a marshy floodplain on the Sea of Japan, formed by the Teshio River and the Sarobetsu River. The Sarobetsu Plain was added to the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance in 2005. They are home to more than 100 kinds of flowers and offer beautiful and much photographed scenery.

259 km

WAKKANAI

Wakkanai

WHAT TO SEE

SOYA-MISAKI Thirty kilometers from Wakkanai, this cape is mainland Japan's most northern point. The cape is also a good spot for bird watchers. There are four return buses each day, departing from JR Wakkanai Station (one hour each way, ¥2430).

RISHIRI-REBUN-SAROBETSU NATIONAL PARK These two islands, Rishiri-to and Rebun-to, are the main attraction of the area, featuring native wildflowers, beautiful landscapes and fantastic hiking for all levels of hiker. To get to Rishiri or Rebun, take a ferry from Wakkanai (2nd class one way tickets to Rishiri or Rebun, ¥2200).

WAKKANAI KOEN This is a large park on the grassy hills west of the town, from where you can get good views of the sea. There are nice walking trails to explore. If you are here during Hanami, there are more than 4 000 wild cherry trees in the park. To get an even better view you can go to the top of the 70-meter-high Motoe Hiraku Centennial Memorial Tower (daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Jul-Sep, until 9 p.m.) for a 360° view. You can sometimes even see Sakhalin in Russia.

WHERE TO STAY

DORMY INN WAKKANAI (AKA TENPOKU NO YU) 天然温泉 天北の湯 ドーミーイン稚内 4 minutes on foot from Wakkanai Station. It is reasonable, comfortable and a great location. Enjoy the hot spring on the top floor.
2-7-13 Chuo, Wakkanai, Hokkaido, 097-0022
01-6224-5489
www.hotespa.net/hotels/wakkanai

CROWNE PLAZA ANA WAKKANAI 稚内全日空ホテル Only 3 minutes on foot from Wakkani Station. The rooms face the ocean giving a good view.
1-2-2 Kaiun, Wakkanai, Hokkaido, 097-0023
01-6223-8111
https://www.ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels/us/en/reservation

WHERE TO EAT

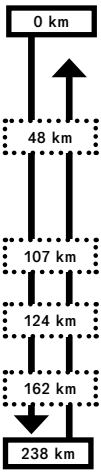
PECHIKA ペチカ A small but popular Russian restaurant, whose proprietor will often sing in both Japanese and Russian. Located south, down the main street from Wakkanai Station.
Open 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., closed Sundays.
01-6223-7070
http://www.wakkanai-fukukou.com/pechika/index.html

SUSHI RYU 寿司竜 Fresh sushi located really close to Wakkanai Station. From the station, walk east; it is across the road from the post office.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.
01-6223-5631

46 From Asahikawa to Abashiri

238 km total, **220 min** fastest journey, **5** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **8:35** → (A) **12:18** | Last Train (D) **19:08** → (A) **23:00**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **05:56** → (A) **9:44** | Last Train (D) **17:25** →(A) **21:14**

Asahikawa is an important railway junction, with lines traveling north to Wakkanai, east to Abashiri and south to Obihiro and Kushiro. To head for Abashiri you will take the Sekihoku Line. It is advisable to make a seat reservation, as the number of carriages is limited.



ASAHIKAWA

KAMIKAWA The town is approximately 30 minutes by bus from Sounkyo Onsen and other tourist attractions in the Daisetsuzan National Park. The longest river of Hokkaido, the Ishikari, flows from here. There are ryokan at Sounkyo Onsen as well as a public bathhouse. Sounkyo Ropeway followed by a chair lift will take you to Mt. Kurodake.

SHIRATAKI The station has been made to look like a station of times-gone-by, with its clock tower and weathercock.

ENGARU Home to Japan's largest cosmos park. The train stops here for passengers to turn their seats round, to still be facing the direction of travel when the train leaves the station.

RUBESHIBE Boasts one of the world's largest cuckoo clocks.

ABASHIRI

Abashiri

WHAT TO SEE

OKHOTSK RYU-HYO (DRIFT ICE) MUSEUM The museum includes a 'Drift Ice Experience Room', which shows what the Sea of Okhotsk is like in the depths of winter.
Apr-Oct, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Nov-Mar, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., closed Dec 29th- Jan 5th, ¥540.

ICEBREAKER AURORA From January 20th to the first Sunday in April, the Aurora runs one-hour trips on the Sea of Okhotsk.
4-6 trips per day, ¥3300.

ABASHIRI PRISON MUSEUM Half-way up Mt. Tento, accessible by bus, the prison built in 1890 is now open to visitors.
Apr-Oct, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Nov-Mar, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., ¥1080.

WHERE TO STAY

TENTO NO SATO HOTEL HONJIN ABASHIRIKO 天都の郷 ホテル本陣網走湖 Located 10 minutes from JR Abashiri Station, you can enjoy the view of the Lake Abashiri-shi from the communal bath
34 Oomagari, Abashiri-shi, Hokkaido, 093-0045
0152-44-5577
http://breezbay-group.com/honjin-a/

HOKUTEN NO OKA LAKE ABASHIRI TSURUGA RESORT 北天の丘あばしり湖鶴雅リゾート Located on the shores of Lake Abashiri, offers an unique Hokkaido experience, through its distinctive design paying homage to the native culture.
159 Yobito, Abashiri-shi, Hokkaido, 099-242
01-5248-3211
www.hokutennooka.com/en

WHERE TO EAT

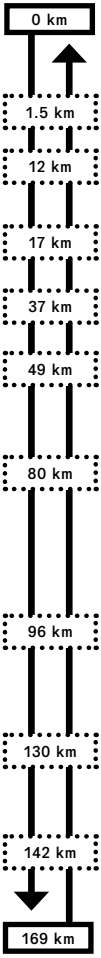
FUKAI ふか井 Local cuisine and comfort food in a lively atmosphere. From the station, head right onto Minami-Chuo-dori and turn right at the first traffic light. Follow the road as it curves to the left, then turn left at the traffic light. Look for a bright orange door sign on the left, across the street from the post office.
Open 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., closed Sundays.
01-5243-3086

ABASHIRI BEER HALL 網走ビール館 Beer and yakiniku, one of Japan's most beloved (and borrowed) cuisines. From the station, turn right on Minami-Chuo-dori and continue walking until you see a big building on the left with a flag that says 'yakiniku'.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. (midnight on Fridays and Saturdays).
01-5241-0008
www.takahasi.co.jp/beer/yakiniku

47 From Abashiri to Kushiro

169 km total, **175 min** fastest journey, **5** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:41** → (A) **10:00** | Last Train (D) **18:52** → (A) **22:15**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **06:05** → (A) **09:21** | Last Train (D) **18:52** → (A) **22:03**

The journey along the Senmo Line from Abashiri to Kushiro offers some stunning scenery, along the coast to Shiretoko-Shari, then through Akan National Park. It is not for those in a hurry as only local trains run on this line.



ABASHIRI

KATSURADAI Just after Katsuradai, on the left of the train are great views of the Sea of Okhotsk.

KITAHAMA It is just a short walk to Lake Tofutsu, which is popular for bird watching in winter. The station café is also worth a visit, to have a drink with a view of the sea.

GENSEI-KAEN The station is also another good place for views of the lake.

SHIRETOKO-SHARI This is the nearest station to the Shiretoko Peninsula and Shiretoko National Park (see opposite page).

KIYOSATOCHO After the train leaves this station look on the left for Mt. Shari, which rises up to 1 547 meters.

KAWAYU-ONSEN It is possible to borrow bicycles from the station to visit the surrounding area: Mt. Iwo, an active volcano; the center of Kawayu onsen, which has numerous foot onsen; the museum dedicated to the local sumo wrestler Taiho-san; a little further on is Lake Kussharo, reputed to be home to Kussie the lake monster.

MASHU Stop here for Lake Mashu, which is known as 'the lake of mystery and illusion'. It is surrounded by trees and is usually cloaked in a blanket of fog. It is one of the clearest in the world and one of the deepest in Japan. A bus service (though infrequent) runs from the station to two observation decks.

GOJIKOKU On the edge of Kushiro-Shitsugen National Park that was created in order to preserve the country's largest wetland and marsh habitat, which supports the only known population of endangered Japanese Cranes in Japan.

TORO You can hire bikes at the station to visit Lake Toro, the biggest lake in the Kussharo wetland. Enjoy kayaking in summer and Japanese smelt fishing from the ice in winter.

KUSHIRO

Shiretoko

WHAT TO SEE

SHIRETOKO NATIONAL PARK The Park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005. It is worlds away from modern Japan and is inhabited by bears, deers, eagles and the world's largest owls. To reach the park from Shiretoko-Shari Station, take the bus to Utoro village, which is the center of visitor activity. From Utoro you can take a shuttle bus to visit the Nature Center and Shiretoko Five Lakes (3 times a day, ¥900). To visit the wildest parts of the park, apart from hiking, you can take a boat trip. Boats leave from Utoro Harbour and travel along the peninsular (3-hours, ¥3000-¥8000). From Rausau, boats head into the Nemuro Straits along Russia's Kunashiri Island. Summer is the best time for whale watching. You can also take a dip at Kamuiwakka Onsen. Get tickets for bus access from the Nature Center.

WHERE TO STAY

IRUKA HOTEL ビューポイント いるかホテル Located near the coast, this hotel provides a beautiful view of the ocean, located near the coast.
5 Utoro Nishi, Shari-cho, Shari-gun, Hokkaido, 099-4354
01-5224-2888
www.iruka-hotel.com

SHIRETOKO NOBLE HOTEL 知床ノーブルホテル is located in the National Park, easily accessible from the Ferry or the Bus Terminal. The hotel just opened in 2010 and the rooms and facilities are fresh and comfortable.
3 Utoro Higashi, Shari-cho, Shari-gun, Hokkaido, 099-4355
01-5222-5211
www.shiretoko-noblehotel.com

WHERE TO EAT

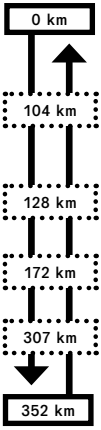
KUSHIMARU 知床 串丸 Quick and inexpensive yakitori very close to Shiretoko-Shaki Station. From the station walk straight up the main road and turn right onto route 92. Kushimaru will be on your left.
Open 6 p.m. to midnight, closed Sundays.
01-5223-5710

AJISAI そば処味彩 Soba noodles and tempura. Take the first right off the traffic circle in front of the station, then the first left.
Open 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., closed Wednesdays.
01-5226-7511

48 From Kushiro to Sapporo

352 km total, **240 min** fastest journey, **6** trains per day
<**OUTWARD JOURNEY**> First Train (D) **06:26** → (A) **10:45** | Last Train (D) **19:00** → (A) **22:58**
<**RETURN**> First Train (D) **07:00** → (A) **11:00** | Last Train (D) **19:40** → (A) **23:55**

This route is covered by the beautiful blue, green and red Super Ozora Limited Express Train.



KUSHIRO

IKEDA Known locally for its wine and dairy products. You can sample the local wine at Ikeda Wine Castle. You can also walk along the fields to Happiness Dairy, to sample some local ice cream.

OBIHIRO In Obihiro area enjoy a bath in Tokachi-onsen hot springs and visit the beautiful lake Shikaribetsu.

SHINTOKU You will need to change here to continue the journey to Asahikawa on a local train. The town is known for buckwheat soba (noodles).

MINAMI-CHITOSE Change here to New Chitose Airport

SAPPORO

Kushiro

WHAT TO SEE

FISHERMAN'S WHARF A large waterside shopping and restaurant complex, which is popularly known as MOO.
Stores: daily, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; restaurants: daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

KUSHIRO CITY MUSEUM An overview of the city of Kushiro and Kushiro Shitsugen National Park. There are also exhibitions about Ainu traditions and the Japanese crane.

WASHO MARKET A large market opposite the station, selling fish and seafood.
Mon-Sat, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

NUSAMAI BRIDGE The symbol of the city. The four bronze statues represent the four seasons. It was the first bridge in Japan to have statues on it.

WHERE TO STAY

KUSHIRO MARSHLAND TORO NO YADO 釧路湿原とうろ宿
Cozy accommodation where you can enjoy a great view of Kushiro Marsh.
5-minute walk from JR Toro Station (30 minutes away by train from Kushiro).
83-8, Toro, Shibecha-cho, Kawakami-gun, Hokkaido, 088-2261
01-5487-3655
www9.plala.or.jp/touro

COMFORT HOTEL KUSHIRO コンフォートホテル釧路 If you are looking for a convenient location you want to stay here. Located right in front of Kushiro Train Station, easy access to City Museum, Zoo and within walking distance of Washo Market (famous fresh fish market).
13-1-1 Kita-odori, Kushiro, Hokkaido, 085-0015
01-5421-5711
www.choice-hotels.jp/cfkushi

WHERE TO EAT

SHAKEBANYA 喰い処 鮭番屋 Eat with the local fishermen with the daily catch, like salmon or salmon roe, served over rice. Located on the docks west of Kushiro Station.
Open 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Closed Wednesdays from January to April.
01-5425-0503
http://www.syake-banya.jp/

TORAYA 虎や The local izakaya, serving plenty of grilled fish fresh off the nearby docks. From Kushiro Station, follow Kita Odori towards the river; take the last left before the bridge.
Open daily, 5 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.
01-5425-0511
www.946toraya.com

Private Lines

The Japan Railways and your JR Pass will take you all over Japan, but you may also come across 'private lines', or railways that are not owned by the Japan Railways company.

The JR Group was, for a long time, a public company owned by the Japanese government, but was turned into a collection of seven private companies (divided by region) nearly 30 years ago. A national JR Pass covers lines run by all seven of these companies: JR Hokkaido, JR East, JR Central, JR West, JR Shikoku, and JR Kyushu (the 7th is a freight line not intended for passengers). Although the Japan Railways is split into several companies, the JR's expansive rail lines, providing access everywhere from the biggest cities to the most remote countryside, remains as it has been.

The phrase 'private lines' refers to all railway companies that are not part of the JR Group. These lines range from the tiniest street cars with only five stops to major companies that provide access across an entire region. Here are a few things to note about private rail lines:

1. **It is not possible to accidentally switch between a JR train and a non-JR train.**
   Even if JR and another company share a station, JR line trains and platforms are separated from those of other companies. If your journey includes transferring between lines, you will need to exit the ticket gates of the JR, then enter the ticket gates of the second company.
2. **Purchasing tickets is easy!**
   If you need to switch to a private line, you will find ticket machines very close to any ticket gate. These tickets are always selected by price, which you can find using the bilingual map above the row of ticket machines.
3. **Metro/Subway lines are NOT JR lines.**
   Metro lines are owned by their respective cities and not the JR company. This means that a JR Pass or regional pass will not work with metro lines. The good news is that many major cities have JR lines that run through them, too!
4. **Many maps make it easy to spot JR lines.**
   Maps of Japan and its cities usually denote JR lines with a black and white dotted line. This common key is very handy for quickly finding out how you can make the most of your pass!
5. **Be aware of large stations with multiple rail lines.**
   Many large stations in big cities are a hub where a mix of subways, JR lines, and private lines all intersect. When planning out your train trips, especially with Hyperdia (**visit www.hyperdia.com/en/**), take care to check the names.

MAJOR PRIVATE LINES

Most large cities and their surrounding areas have very big private railway companies. These lines often intersect with the JR, but also provide service to areas to which the JR has not yet come.

1. **Kanto Private Lines**
   The Tokyo metropolis area and its vast surrounding suburbs are covered by a complex system of JR lines, subway lines, and private railway companies. Examples of some of the biggest private lines include: the Seibu Railways connects inner Tokyo with Saitama Prefecture, while the Tobu Railway will take you anywhere

from Tokyo Skytree and Nikko to Chiba and Gunma Prefectures. The Keikyu and Odakyu Railways connect Yokohama and Kanagawa Prefecture with Tokyo.

2. **Chubu Private Lines**
Nagoya is covered by an extensive subway network, but its other main rail system is the Meitetsu Railways. This railway connect Nagoya Station to Chubu International Airport, and provides services to many other places of interest in Aichi Prefecture. The Kintetsu Railway also connects Nagoya with Ise.

3. **Kansai Area Private Lines**
Because the Kansai Region has many large cities and other well-known areas all in close proximity, many private lines keep these cities interconnected. The Kintetsu Railway stretches from Nagoya to Ise, to Wakayama and Nara, to Kyoto and all over Osaka. The Keihan Railway is an alternative route between Kyoto and Osaka, which also stops at Fushimi Inari and Uji in southern Kyoto. Osaka and Kobe are connected by the Hanshin Railway (the local baseball team also takes their name from this company), as well as the Hankyu Railway, which also includes Kyoto and its south-western suburbs.

PRIVATE LINES ONLY

Most destinations on your trip through Japan will be covered by the JR and your rail pass. There are, however, a few popular places that do not have any JR lines. Please take note!

1. **Hakone (see p. 26)**
The Hakone Tozan Railway runs all trains throughout Hakone, including ropeway and funiculars that climb the mountainous terrain. To reach Hakone, you will need to transfer from the JR at Odawara Station, located in Kanagawa Prefecture. On the plus side, your JR Pass covers a shinkansen ride from Tokyo to Odawara!

2. **Mount Fuji (see p. 27)**
Mount Fuji and its surrounding area, including Lake Kawaguchi and the Fuji-Q Highland amusement park, are only accessible by rail via the Fuji Kyuko, or 'Fujikyu' company. From Tokyo, you can use your JR Pass to Otsuki Station on the Chuo Line, then transfer to the Fujikyu from there.

3. **Kurobe Gorge (see p. 45)**
If you are visiting Kurobe Gorge in Toyama Prefecture, there are several private lines that you may need to take including the Toyama Chiho Railway, as well as the Kurobe Gorge Railway for sightseeing.

4. **Eiheiji Temple (see p. 49)**
Eiheiji Temple in Fukui Prefecture can be accessed from Fukui Station by the Echizen Railway line, then a quick bus ride. You might also consider taking a bus from the station, although this is also a private line.

5. **Mount Koya (Koya-san) (see p. 68)**
The Nankai Railways are the only company with ropeway service up the mountain, but runs from Namba Station in the middle of Osaka.

6. **Izumo Shrine (see p. 104)**
The Ichibata Railways provides train access to Izumo Shrine from the main JR Station, Izumoshi. It is about a twenty minute ride to the end of the Ichibata's rail line to get to the Shrine.

JR Train Emergency Information

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY WHILE ON A TRAIN

It's highly unlikely that you'll experience any problems or emergency situations while traveling with your Japan Rail Pass, but just in case, we've provided some information that might be good to know.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

To call the police in Japan, **dial 110**.

To call the fire department or an ambulance, **dial 119.**

If you need to describe your location, remember to add '-eki' to the end of a station name (eki means station), for example 'Tokyo-eki' (Tokyo Station). Add '-sen' to the end of a train line name, for example the 'Tokaido-sen' (the Tokaido Line).

EARTHQUAKES AND TRAINS

Earthquakes can be quite unnerving at times, but rest assured that all trains in Japan are equipped with sensors that will stop the train in case of a high magnitude tremor. Depending on the situation, the train may continue on at a slower speed, or the train may need to stop for some time. Please stay on board unless specifically guided off the train by a crew member.

There will always be train crew on board to assist you, and they are well-practiced at dealing with these situations.

EARTHQUAKES WHILE UNDERGROUND

If you are underground in a train station during an earthquake, know that it is actually safer to be underground than above, so don't try to run outside! It is best to protect your head with a bag and, if possible, seek shelter under something like a bench, and crouch to keep your balance. As mentioned above, trains might be delayed or cancelled, depending on the magnitude of the tremor.

TYPHOONS

If a typhoon is heading for Japan whilst you are traveling, it's best to re-arrange your itinerary away from the affected areas. Typhoons, especially with their high winds, often cause major train delays and cancellations. Be sure to keep an eye on the weather during your trip — try the official Japanese Meteorology Association's English-language website.

In case of major train delays and cancellations, all cars on trains become non-reserved to fix the maximum amount of people, which means you will not need to re-book seat on the train.

JR HOTLINES

Parts of the Japan Rail system do include English-language hotlines and websites. If you are traveling using the JR East system, here is the information:
JR East English info line: **+81 (0)50 2016 1603, from 10 am to 6 pm.** JR East Delays and Emergencies website: **http://traininfo.jreast.co.jp/train_info/e/service.aspx** JRP Assistance: For extra assurance during your trip to Japan, you can also subscribe to our JRP Assistance, which includes a hotline to our staff in Japan, fluent in English, French, and Japanese. Check out our Assistance page for more information : **www.japan-rail-pass.com/jrp-assistance**

Ekiben, the Art of Bento

Eki-bento-uri, literally 'bento sold at the station', the *ekiben* is a packed lunch served during a train ride. Carefully packed, the box contains several small regional dishes nicely arranged. The *ekiben* are known for being particularly delicious as well as cheap, which makes them quite popular in every region of Japan.

THE *EKIBEN* PHENOMENON

Ekiben appeared in Japan in the late 19th century and spread in the 70-80s. Since then the appearance of high-speed trains has slowed down its development, but *ekiben* are still very popular in Japan. The Japanese are really interested in cultural tourism and food tasting, therefore ekiben are now the subject of television programs, festivals and magazines.

TASTING ON-BOARD

The *ekiben* is ideal for long journeys by train. Accompanied by disposable wooden chopsticks (waribashi), a paper towel, soy sauce and green tea, it is a balanced meal and is easy to enjoy. *Ekiben* are sold in stations, on platforms and on board long distance trains and shinkansen. Nowadays *ekiben* are also available in convenience stores.

AN ECONOMICAL AND DELICIOUS OPTION

The *ekiben* is an individual dish that usualy contains rice, vegetables and fish, pork or marinated chicken. There are hundreds of different kinds of this packed lunch. They all offer quality regional products, cooked the same day, for a relatively low price: between ¥700 and ¥1200. The *ekiben* is generally eaten cold, but you can now find *ekiben* with a chemical tongue that enables it to be heated up in less than a minute.

A REGIONAL SPECIALITY

Each *ekiben* is specific to a train station. The lunch box itself is made out of plastic, wood or ceramic. It is covered with a Kakegami paper with traditional patterns and decorated with a ribbon. The *ekiben* is an artistic composition in which colors and textures are as important as flavors. The packaging, composition and ingredients of the ekiben perpetuate regional traditions. The *ekiben* invites us to taste local produce.

THE TOP 3 *EKIBEN*

Among the hundreds of varieties, there are three *ekiben* that are particularly popular: *Toge no kamameshi*, an *ekiben* served in a ceramic dish consisiting of chicken, rice and vegetables (Yokokawa Station – Shin-Etsu Line). *Masu no sushi*: trout sushi wrapped in bamboo leaves and placed in a box made of cedar wood (Toyama Station – Hokuriku line). *Ika Meshi*: squid in sweet and sour sauce garnished with rice (Mori Station – Line Hakodate).

Transporting luggage in Japan

The major drawback of travel is of course luggage. But the good news with Japan is that you can travel light without a problem. Door-to-door services are especially fast, secure and cheap. So don't miss out and can fill your suitcases with souvenirs!

AIRPORT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

After a long flight and suffering from jetlag, you may want to be relieved of your luggage to have your hands free during your first contact with the country. To do so, you can send your cases directly to the place where you will be staying using the JAL ABC or Takkyubin (or Ta-Q-Bin) luggage delivery services. Both have counters at the airport. Takkyubin has the advantage of not requiring reservation and of delivering your baggage on the same day in some cases. The cost varies from ¥1500 to ¥3000. This service will be especially valuable for the return journey, as the number of cases increases as souvenirs are gathered. Similarly, you can collect your luggage at the delivery counter and go directly to check in with your airline. Note however, you have to send your luggage at least 2 days before your departure.

BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF YOUR TRIP

If you have decided to travel down from Tokyo to Kyoto, stopping for a few visits on the way, and you do not want to be loaded down with baggage, Takkyubin is an excellent solution. For a very reasonable price, you can have your luggage delivered to your next accommodation the next day (depending on the distance). For example from Tokyo, a suitcase can be delivered the next day in Kyoto for only ¥1900, and in Kyushu for ¥2200.

To have your luggage delivered, you can:

1. Make a request by telephone or by internet.
2. Take your luggage to a convenience store offering the Takkyubin delivery service (it will be indicated by a symbol of a black cat carrying its kitten, at the store entrance).
3. Take your luggage directly to the Kuroneko Yamato counter (a delivery company that provides Takkyubin services) in your neighbourhood. If you do not know where it is, lookout for a delivery employee in a yellow and green uniform and cap and ask them. For information, although Yamato remains the largest delivery company, there are others such as Sagawa Express or Nittsu.
4. If you are staying in a hotel, of course, the staff will take care of all this for you.

TRAVELING WITH LUGGAGE

If you have to take public transport, finding room for your luggage is not always easy. Although coaches have large boots (in Japan, luggage is never put on the roof and is always handled with great care), on trains, the space at the entrance of the coaches to store suitcases may seem very limited. If you take the shinkansen during the week, you will find room, as many passengers are people going to work and have no luggage.

BE CAREFUL

However, if you are traveling on a weekend or a bank holiday, transportation is sometimes so crowded that you might not find enough space, not only for your luggage, but also for yourself. Moreover, even though they exist, it is not always easy to find lifts in the stations. If you are in Tokyo for example, the crowd and the stairs can be obstacles, you have to remain alert and look for the signs. Small rural stations are not always equipped with escalators.

DEPOSITING LUGGAGE

Airports, major train stations and even department stores offer left luggage services costing between ¥500 and ¥1000. You will also find many automatic coin lockers. There are different sizes and cost between ¥300 and ¥500 for one day (until midnight).

One last thing, if you have forgotten an item of luggage during your trip, for example on a train, do not despair, objects are rarely stolen and can often be retrieved at a lost property office. Do not hesitate to contact the transport company that you were traveling with.

Outside Your Window

The Top 10 Views from JR Trains

HISATSU LINE

Kumamoto Prefecture, Kyushu. The southern island of Kyushu is packed with must-see sites and views. What better way to explore than by train? The JR Hisatsu line runs through Kumamoto Prefecture and is well-known for its incredible views all along the line. Kaiji Station itself is nothing impressive, but its name — Japanese for sea road — hints at the spectacular sights you'll see as you pass by it on your way from Kumamoto to Hitoyoshi City.

TOKAIDO SHINKANSEN LINE

Shizuoka Prefecture, Kanto. There's many different ways to see Mt. Fuji on your trip to Japan — such as from a hot spring, by a lake — but one of the most famous ways to view Mt. Fuji (on a clear day) is from the window of a shinkansen bullet train on your way from Tokyo to Kyoto. If heading south, be sure to sit on the right side of the train, and if heading up to Tokyo, sit on the left!

CHUO LINE

Tokyo, Yamanashi, Nagano, Aichi Prefectures, Kanto to Chubu. The Chuo Main Line runs 424.6 kilometers from Tokyo to Nagoya, passing through two regions, several prefectures, and more noteworthy views than you can count on both hands. It's a great opportunity to view the best of Japan's countryside: mountains, rivers, rice paddies, cherry blossoms, and fall foliage.

HANWA LINE

Osaka Prefecture, Kansai. The Hanwa Line, running from Osaka City to Wakayama, is a perfect detour for a little extra cherry blossom viewing in springtime. Maybe you've seen the sakura in Kyoto and are on your way to Mt. Koya, or you've got a Kansai pass and don't want to miss a single bit. The absolute best moment for sakura viewing on the Hanwa Line is the end of March.

FURANO LINE

Asahikawa, Hokkaido. If you've skipped the bitter cold of a Hokkaido winter and want to go during its refreshing summer season instead, the Furano line is an absolute must. Japan's rainy season brings about glorious green fields and rows upon rows of flowers, from lavender to sunflowers.

SETO-OHASHI LINE

Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku. If you're heading to northern Shikoku for its incredible art installations or its delicious udon, you might consider taking the Seto-Ohashi Line to cross from Okayama Prefecture, on the main island, to Kagawa Prefecture, in Shikoku. This train uses a long stretch of 6 connected bridges spanning 13 kilometers, which form the Great Seto Bridge.

GONO LINE

Aomori Prefecture, Tohoku. The Gono Line runs from Akita Prefecture to Aomori Prefecture, the northern-most prefecture on the main island, Honshu, and provides the ideal winter view — cross through a snow-covered landscape, passing the picturesque Mt. Iwaki, and see the raging winter seas of northern Japan.

TAKAYAMA MAIN LINE

Gifu Prefecture, Chubu. The Takayama Main Line runs from Gifu City to Toyama City, running through their respective prefectures. You will probably find yourself on this line on your way to its namesake, the beautiful Takayama City, but before you get there, be sure to take in the rushing rivers and rolling mountains from your seat, whether they're snow covered in winter or lush green in summer.

BIWAKO LINE

Lake Biwa, Shiga Prefecture, Kansai. Japan's largest lake, Lake Biwa, is a great stop whether you're passing by on your way to Kyoto, taking a side trip to view the incredible castle in Hikone, or even heading north to Fukui to see the beaches of Japan.

SOTOBO LINE

Chiba Prefecture, Kanto. Chiba Prefecture is just across the bay from the sprawling metropolis of Tokyo, but still just far enough away to offer a slice of rural Japanese life. The Sotobo Line crosses the prefecture, running through fields of rice and flowers, then along the Pacific Ocean, ending in Kamogawa, a beach town with a beautiful national park.

Useful Train Station Vocabulary

Words and Phrases to help you in Japanese Train Stations

TRAIN WORDS

As you travel through the country with your Japan Rail Pass, you're bound to see some of the same Japanese words come up over and over. We've provided a few tips to make your travel even smoother, but don't worry! Everything is usually written in English, too.

自由席 (JIYŪ SEKI): NON-RESERVED SEATING

All shinkansen bullet trains include 3 cars of free seating-- no seat reservations necessary, just board the train! The jiyū seki cars are either the first three cars or the last three cars, so check platform sign boards to check where to go.

指定席 (SHITEI SEKI): RESERVED SEATING

These cars require a specific seat reservation, and the conductor will come by to check your ticket. If you have not reserved a seat and notice that you're on a shitei seki car, you may be in the wrong place!

優先座席 (YŪSEN ZASEKI): PRIORITY SEATING

This phrase is usually followed by pictures to explain. These are seats reserved for people who may need to sit most: the elderly, expecting mothers, injured and sick people, and the physically challenged. It's probably best to avoid sitting in these seats, even if there's no one around, to keep them open for the aforementioned passengers.

喫煙 (KITSU-EN): SMOKING [SECTION]

Some long distance trains, including shinkansen, will have smoking areas-- either a car where it's OK to smoke, or a standing area separated from the seats.

禁煙 (KIN-EN): NON-SMOKING [SECTION]

Although it sounds very similar to the word for smoking section, kin-en designates an area as non-smoking. This includes all normal, shorter distance trains and subways, as well as buses and other transportation.

各駅停車 (KAKU-EKI TEISHA): 'STOPS AT EVERY STATION'

This will let you know that the train is going to stop at every single station, and is not express. Sometimes semi-express, or junkyū trains, will start out as express, then switch to kaku-eki teisha and become a local train.

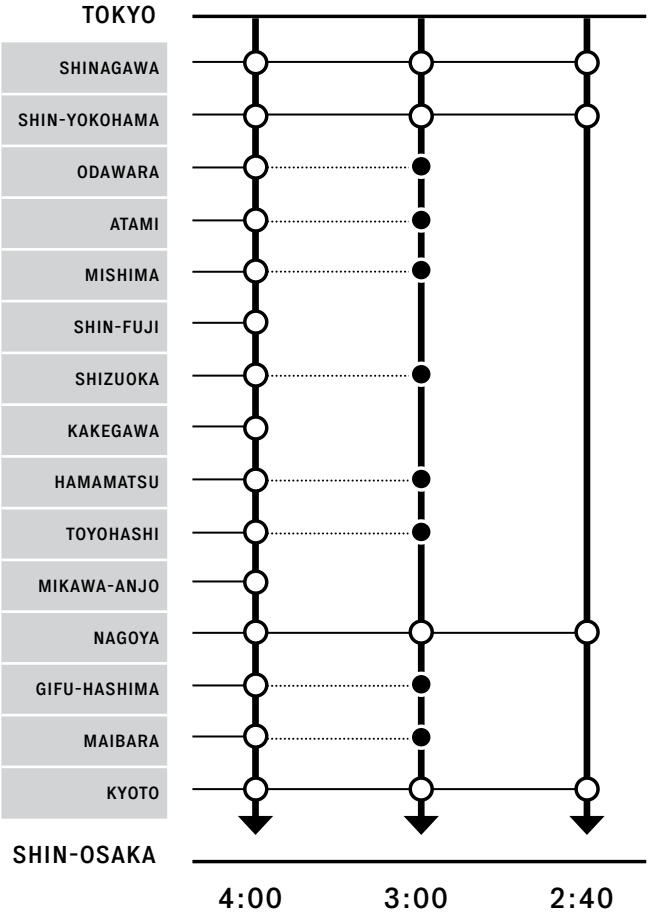
特急連絡 (TOKKYŪ RENRAKU): 'CONNECTS TO THE EXPRESS TRAIN'

This is the Japanese word for 'contact' and it's used in all sorts of situations, just like its English counterpart. If you happen to see this word on a train sign or hear the conductor announce it on the train, however, it means that this train will make contact with another train.In otherwords, if you're on a futsū local train, they'll tell you at what station it stops at the same time as a tokkyū express train-feel free to hop from the local to the express, or vice versa, to save time in your journey!

The Tokaido Shinkansen

Running from Tokyo to Osaka, the Tokaido Shinkansen is a bullet train you will most likely be using when traveling with your JR Pass. Here is a brief run-down about its three iterations.

KODAMA	HIKARI	NOZOMI
Stops at every station, taking about 4 hours total.	Second fastest train, only 20 minutes slower than Nozomi. Which stops it makes varies by train.	Makes the fewest stops and fastest train. **NOT available with JR Pass.**



How to Use the Train in Tokyo

A little guide to help you find your way in the capital.

SEVERAL COMPANIES FOR ONE NETWORK

Before departure, you can download some **applications to help you find your way**:

1. Google Maps
2. Tokyo + Rail Map
3. JR website
4. Hyperdia website

The tricky thing about trains in Tokyo is that there are several different companies. The main company is the JR East, which runs the Yamanote Line, the Chuo Line, the Sakyo Line... The other companies are often organized around one of the big stations and only have a few lines.

In the stations, the JR trains go through JR platforms, the Odakyu trains through Odakyu platforms and so on. That way, stations are organized according to companies, and then trains. The different trains' zones are blocked off by barrier gates: you will need a ticket to go in or get out.

Each line is easily identified by its color. The names of the lines are written in Japanese characters but also in Romaji (the alphabet as we know it).

To go from one place to another, you have to identify:

5. Your departing station
6. Your arriving station
7. If possible, the name and the color of the line you will ride.

A GOOD SIGN SYSTEM

The colors of the lines are the same in all the stations' sign systems, on the platforms, on the trains and on the screens. You can easily identify the Yamanote Line thanks to its green color. In some stations, there can be several lines on one platform. In that case, they are indicated on the notice board, and the order of the trains is written on the screen.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TRAINS

There can be three types of trains in the JR stations: local, rapid and express. Before going onboard, carefully read the notice board to check which type of train stops at the station you want to go to.

THE CONNECTIONS

Connections between lines are easy to make if you know which company and which line you are going to use. Sometimes, connections are indicated aboard the train. Once on the platform, notice boards show you the way and the timetables for the next trains.

THE EXIT

The exits in the stations are indicated by yellow signposts and contain orientation indications (South, North, West, East), or significant landmarks such as the Hachiko exit in Shibuya. The word 'Gate' is used to indicate the entrances in the network (a ticket is necessary) and its connections; the 'Exit' means the exit of the station's building.

How to Use the Metro in Tokyo

Using the subway in Tokyo is very easy once you have understood a few elements of location. The sign system is very clear but you must understand how it works in order to get around the city. The subway is run by two companies: TOEI Subway (4 lines) and TOKYO Metro (9 lines). Be careful, JR Lines do not belong to the subway network.

A VERY SIMPLE SIGN SYSTEM

The applications to help you find your way are:

1. Google Maps
2. Tokyo + Rail Map
3. Hyperdia website

The two companies, TOEI Subway and Tokyo Metro, are organized according to the same principle: each subway line has its own color, and each station has a number (for instance Yoyogi-koen is number C02, C standing for Chiyoda Line and 2 because it is the second station of the line ; its color is dark green). That way, C stands for Chiyoda, Z for Hanzomon, G for Ginza. From the outside, you can easily spot the entrance of the station thanks to the logo of the company. Once inside the station, try to respect the arrows' signs on the floor which help organize the crowd.

GETTING AROUND THE STATION

On the platform, you can check the direction of the train thanks to the signpost indicating all the stations of the line with their numbers (it looks like a thermometer). The finale destination is also given by the electronic signboards.

THE CONNECTIONS

All connections are indicated on the thermometer of the line and by signposts. Knowing the cars' numbers will help you spot the right car for your connection. Once on the platform for the connection, the walking distance to go from one line to another is indicated.

EXITING THE STATION

The subway stations all count several numbered exits. That is why it is easier to know the number of your exit in advance. If not, you can still read the maps or follow the signs. Exits can be named '1A', '1B', '2', '3'... One of the most impressive exemple of it is Otemachi, which has an incredible amount of exits. The exits are indicated by yellow signposts.

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Meet our Travel

YOANN DIOT

A year and a half ago, Yoann moved to Fukuoka and fell madly in love with the island of Kyushu. He will be happy to welcome you and show you around Fukuoka and its region.

WILLIAM FARRE

William fell in love with the old imperial city while studying in Japan. This young Frenchman has now adopted the customs of the city that fit him perfectly.

SAKI NOGUCHI

After living in various big cities of Japan, Saki settled down in Kyoto. Proud to be Japanese and fluent in English, she is always glad to share her knowledge and her love for her native country.

CLÉMENT GOUGEON

Clément moved to Kyoto two years ago, discovering the old capital riding his bike.
He decided to experience its daily life and study its rich history.

Angels in Japan

CHRIS WIGGIN

Soon after graduating in 2010, Chris headed to Japan and has been enjoying every minute in Kanazawa ever since. He knows the city and its region by heart, which he loves cycling around.

LAETITIA DA COSTA

Laetitia has been living in Tokyo for 10 years already. Fascinated by arts and history, she knows all the best cultural and food spots of the capital.

Our Travel Angels have been selected for their deep appreciation of Japanese culture as well as their passion for participating and sharing every day life in Japan. They are ready to welcome you to your Japanese home and guide you to anything you may need to make your trip the ultimate Japan experience.

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